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The Presbyterian Record

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JESUS IS LORD + CONSTRUCTIVE ANXIETY + A PILGRIMAGE BEGINS

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On the Cover: Chandege Orphan Care
Photo by Andrew Faiz

TOP IMAGE: ANDREW FAIZ. BOTTOM LEFT: GETTY IMAGES. BOTTOM RIGHT: BARRY FALLS

Constructive Anxiety

CANADIAN PRESBYTERIANS HAVE MANY ASSETS TO OFFER. **BY DAVID HARRIS**

Anxiety is a funny thing. Too much and you find yourself in an unfocused whirl. Too little and you become complacent and lethargic. Either way, you become unproductive. It's the same for groups or institutions. Good managers know that they need to finely balance the non-anxious presence—keeping a cool head when it all breaks loose—and inducing just enough anxiety so that people are sharp, creative and willing to take risks.

I raise this, because there is a fair bit of anxiety in this as in every other mainline denomination these days. The question is whether it's the right kind of anxiety.

The cause is pretty simply that institutional Christianity, and especially Protestant Christianity, is declining numerically in the West. And some people are still not over that it is no longer the institutional pillar it was 50 years ago.

Globally, Christianity is growing by leaps and bounds. Naturally, there is a tension between the immaturity of the new growth and the hardening dying or dead parts. But overall, there is life and health.

Back to the Presbyterian Church in Canada. As every one knows, numbers are falling and congregations are under increasing financial pressure.

The news this month that congregations will need to contribute more to pensions will no doubt create even more anxiety. As will the fact that Presbyterians Sharing continues to see declining revenues.

Instead of seeing this as a case of the sky falling, however, what if we saw it as simply the ground shifting? Sure it's tough to keep your balance sometimes, but if you do, when the dust settles you are in a great position to rebuild, to move ahead. To face new challenges.

And if that doesn't persuade you, just remember, it's all happened before.

About 500 years ago, in fact.

Instead of seeing this as a case of the sky falling, however, what if we saw it as simply the ground shifting?

A Reformed denomination such as the PCC ought to feel pretty confident facing the current storm of change, because if roots are useful for anything, it is for the anchor they provide.

The roots of Presbyterianism are in deep conflict and brutal mayhem. Whatever else it was, the Reformation was nasty and brutish all around.

But instead of Christianity dying, new growth created Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Both were different than what had been before and they were both healthy.

Five hundred years later, it would appear that we are undergoing a similar upheaval. But it doesn't mean the sky is falling. Panicky anxiety is not called for. But constructive anxiety, as in "let's not miss the opportunity," is definitely required.

No one knows what the shape of faith will be in 100 years. There is just too much flux to see clearly. The current broad divisions in Western Christianity will undoubtedly survive: Roman Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals and Pentecostals. But all of them will be different. And all of them will contribute to what is currently labeled Emergence Christianity.

What is important is how we handle these changes.

Presbyterians in Canada have amazing assets to offer new Christians, from a treasury of Celtic spirituality to clean, simple liturgy to an emphasis on engaging minds through teaching.

The denomination also has a wealth of property, the value of which can be realized as dying congregations are closed and money is freed up for new ministries.

And there is the wealth of clergy, many of whom are simply providing palliative care in shrinking, mostly rural Canada. Closing dying churches also frees ministers for new opportunities, especially in fast-growing urban centres.

But more has to change.

Do we need three seminaries? Closing one or two could free human and capital assets to reinvest in one innovative centre of learning.

Discussion began at General Assembly about how to support congregational growth and development better. This should lead to a discussion of polity (are synods still truly useful?) and the relationship between congregations and the national church.

All of which requires good anxiety—the kind that comes from believing that the Spirit may be calling us in new directions. How exciting is that! ■

David Harris is the editor and publisher of the Presbyterian Record. *You can reach him at dharris@presbyterian.ca*

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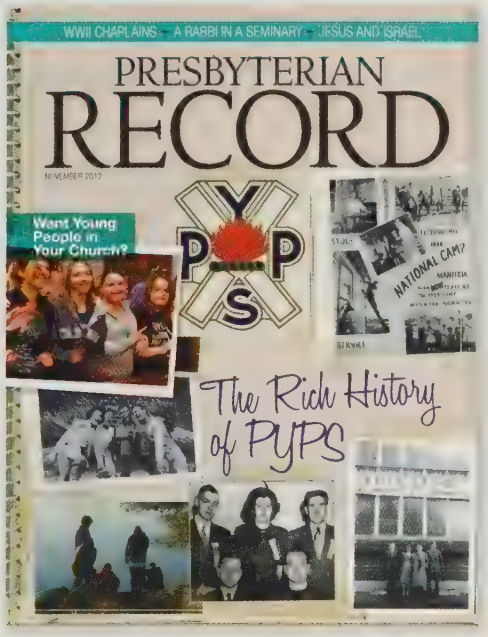

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Peace Seems Impossible

Re West Bank Boycott, November

I was once fortunate enough to live in that region for two and a half years. I personally feel that there will never be any friendship between Israel and its neighbours. In my view Israel wants to be friendly with and help its neighbours in various ways. Israel has forever been shunned by its neighbours, who have a strong sense of hatred.

Because some of Israel's neighbours are not able to recognize Israel as a legitimate state, there can never, ever be a lasting peace between them all.

RALPH FORSHAW, NANAIMO, B.C.

I recently connected with a Presbyterian Church in a Toronto neighborhood to which I relocated from another province. It has been a huge adjustment for me as a senior. The congregation has welcomed my giving and has given to me; in other words, there is loving reciprocity at work. Thank you, God.

In this context I have been introduced to the *Presbyterian Record*, which I read with interest every month.

This article has deeply troubled me. My response was to go to the Bible where I searched prayerfully for insight and guidance. The response I arrived at for my own peace I have felt led to share; no, I feel urged to share.

I am respectfully sharing my thoughts/convictions with humility.

MELITA BARTEL, VIA EMAIL

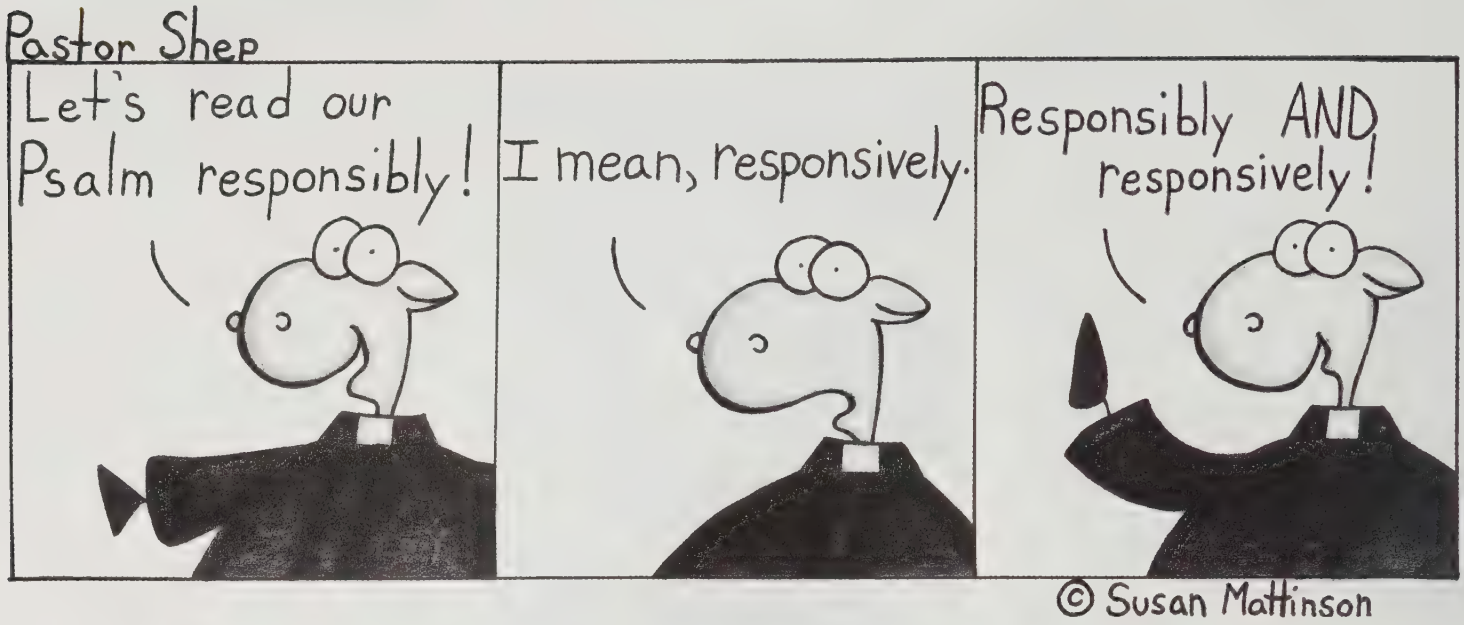
Editor's Note: The response in question is expansive and can be found online following this letter.

Let's Not Forget Sarah

Re Blessing and Restoration, November

This article emphasizes the importance of Abraham, but says not a word about Sarah.

When God made a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17) almost everything that is said of Abraham has a parallel with Sarah. Both Abraham and Sarah are active in the covenant: ➤



Both are given new names and both are told they will be the parents of nations and kings will come from them.

Chapter 17 goes on to say that when God told Abraham that Sarah would have a son he fell on his face and laughed because he was 100 years old and Sarah was 90. Abraham then offers a solution. Why not let his son Ishmael be the one with whom God establishes a covenant? But God says no. God will establish a covenant with Isaac whom Sarah will bear.

In Galatians 4:22-26 Paul uses the allegory of Hagar, the slave woman, and Sarah, the free woman, to represent two covenants—one "born according to the flesh" and one "born through the promise."

LOIS KLEMPA, MONTREAL

Seeking an Old Friend

When I was 16, I joined Frank Conkey's church in Pickering. There were about 90 people in the congregation.

As a young school teacher, God called me to go teach for a year with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Peru. I sold my car and used the money as my support. At the end of the year the I was asked to stay for another year, but my money had run out. So, the principal wrote to 20 people I knew asking them to pray for me, including Frank.

Frank told me later that he carried that letter around for three weeks in his back pocket because he'd never had a letter like that and he didn't know what to do about it. As the next session meeting was winding up, one of the elders asked if anyone had heard about "how Ron Barkey was doing."

Frank pulled out the letter and said "it just so happens that ..." Before the elders left the meeting they'd raised my next year's support.

Because I stayed that second year, I was blessed to meet my wife who came to work with the youth for the summer.

That was the summer of 1972.

That church supported us for many years and although its support terminated after awhile, Frank's never did. One of the elders from that meeting is still our chief supporter.

RON BARKEY, VIA EMAIL

Editor's note: Barkey originally wrote to the Record *seeking his old friend after seeing an article on our website.*

The Presbyterian Church

It is my understanding that our denomination's legal name by Canadian

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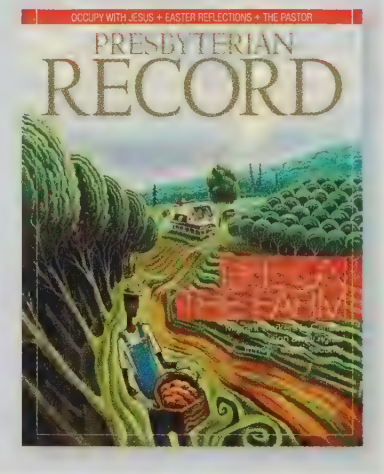

Charter has the word 'The' capitalized and forms part of its official name. We are not any Presbyterian Church; we are The Presbyterian Church in Canada. I've notice in the *Record*, the The is not capitalized.

I certainly realize this is minor in the scope of concerns facing our denomination but it is one that niggles at me with each issue I read of the *Presbyterian Record* (or is it "The" *Presbyterian Record*?).

LORRAINE SWAILE, NANAIMO, BC

Editor's note: Ms. Swaile is correct that the legal name of the denomination is The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Standard practice in Canadian journalism is to lowercase the "The" because it doesn't look as cluttered. In fact, we usually just say the Presbyterian Church, since 99 per cent of our readers are members of the denomination and we can assume they know which church we're referring to. And it's the Presbyterian Record. *No The. Ever.*

Not 'Another Gospel'

Re A Theory of Everything, December

As the editor of the *Three Testaments* compendium I am impressed with the review by Issa Saliba. He mainly deals with the 15 per cent of the book which I wrote personally, but were I a reviewer instead of the editor, I might have also focused on controversies in these more "speculative" sections, designed to bring lay readers into awareness of what is succeeding the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hamadi Gnostic materials in the 21st century.

I protest his intimation that we may be presenting "another gospel" and refer readers to the "instant classic" essay by David Bruce which serves this book as its Introduction to the New Testament.

But Saliba has it right in his last paragraph where he echoes the book's plea that in the present era co-religionists, including Christians, might look for what is best in each other as part of the quest to also define and articulate what they themselves believe in a context of mutual respect.

BRIAN ARTHUR BROWN, ONLINE COMMENT

Advent's Balancing Act

Re Are We There Yet?, Messy Table, Online Blog

Generally I feel much more comfortable with Lent than with Advent. (Not so much tinsel and forced gaiety to distract from contemplating.) But you are right, we are balancing between two worlds, and that is part of living. And heaven knows I could stand to put my party shoes on once in a while!

MAUREEN RENAUD, ONLINE COMMENT

I have been thinking a lot about Advent and how to practice waiting with my ever-impatient four-year-old. She loves art so I may start a mobile or banner with her—a lovely idea, Katie. I have a few Christmas stories tucked away as well. I was thinking I might wrap one to open each Sunday during Advent. I find I want to slow down more, now that she is a bit older, to ensure she starts to understand Advent and ensure we make time to practice waiting.

KIM WEBSTER, ONLINE COMMENT

Note:

Those wishing to order a copy of Ken McMillan's All Things Are Possible, *which was reviewed in December, may do so by writing to catherinemcgee@rogers.com.* ■

online extra

Let the conversation continue.

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Be Church

LAY YOUR HANDS ON SOME SACRAMENTS. **BY ANDREW FAIZ**

In October, a month after returning from Malawi, I served lunch at Evergreen one afternoon with my wife and a few friends. Evergreen, part of the Yonge Street Mission in Toronto, serves vulnerable youth in the city centre. We served about a 100 people a substantial meal. I was surprised at the quality of the food, most of it donated by businesses, the rest paid for by donations. Needless to say, the staff are warm and caring, and passionate about their work.

The meal is a hook to draw youth; a way for the staff to meet and get to know them in a welcoming environment. Staff sit at the tables and talk to them. This one has legal problems, this one is dealing with drugs and alcohol, this one is working in the sex trade. From these conversations relationships are built.

There are cracks in our country into which our overflowing wealth does not fall. The youth I encountered that afternoon have slipped into those. Some are victims of poor parenting, others of pathetic parenting; some have chosen to live in the darkness of the streets rather than in the shadows of their homes; others have been thrown out into the world by circumstance or bad fortune. Regardless they come to Evergreen to get a warm meal and some fellowship and despite themselves they encounter some tools to help them climb out of the gutters. Some of those journeys are akin to climbing Everest.

While in Malawi, I saw the local church involved in every aspect of society, from schools to hospitals to politics, including active evangelism and pastoring. Malawi is a poor country and it's easy to see its neediness. It is dependent on our help. But our own little denomination is equally engaged in its own society; though we don't often recognize that. There are missions organized, financed, managed by congregations, presbyteries, synods and, most particularly, through Canadian Ministries. Plus, there are many funds, often managed via presbyteries, which contribute to missions and projects.

> I've been thinking a lot recently about what it means to be church. What is church? What is worship? Is worship only the thing we do on Sunday morning?

The one closest to my own heart is Flemingdon Gateway Mission, a phoenix that rose out of my congregational home of four decades. In a rough and tumble new-immigrant and subsidized-housing neighbourhood, it provides homework help after school. But the homework is just bait to provide leadership and social skills training to young people. It has been enormously successful on a variety of different levels.

These missions are not just things we do; they are us, but perhaps because we put them on the expenses side of our budget we fail to recognize them as integral to church.

I've been thinking a lot recently about what it means to be church. What is church? What is worship? Is worship only the thing we do on Sunday morning? Or is it something more than that? The communion and community of Sunday worship are very important. It would be repetitive to call them sacramental; but we need to extend our idea of sacrament. It needs to go out into the streets, into the dark alleys of our neighbourhoods, and into the cracks where only the weak and vulnerable slip.

I merely spent a few hours one morning flipping burgers onto plates but I think I was doing church. That was worship. I was an insignificant instrument of that sacrament. The ministers and pastors were the Evergreen workers, sitting at those tables, engaging those lost young people. So, here's my wish for you this year: be a part, even a small part, of that sort of church. Lay your hands on some sacraments this year; be church. ■

Andrew Faiz is the Record*'s managing editor.*

Rev. Dr. Dave Sutherland

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVE SUTHERLAND

'We Made a Little History'

NEWFOUNDLAND MINISTER IS MOD NOMINEE.

BY CONNIE WARDLE

REV. DR. DAVE SUTHERLAND is the only person to stand as nominee for moderator of this year's General Assembly. This is the first time there has been only one candidate for the role.

"It's been overwhelming," Sutherland said on Dec. 4, the day after the announcement. Only 10 days before he'd been asked if he would allow his name to appear on the ballot, he said. "Usually I'd have four months to settle into the idea that this may happen."

Candidates for moderator must be nominated by at least two presbyteries. Normally, more than one person receives the necessary nominations and ballots are sent to presbyteries in December. The votes are then tallied in April and a sole moderator nominee is announced. This year Sutherland was the only person to be nominated by two presbyteries and no election will take place.

Sutherland is expected to be installed as moderator when the 139th General Assembly begins on May 31 in Toronto.

"I'm honoured," said the minister of St. Andrew's ("the Kirk") in St. John's, N.L. "I'm glad to represent the church here to the rest of Canada.

"We made a little history this year. ... I've always been someone who has trusted the process. I think presbyteries are very diligent about how we go about things. What happened this year is not likely to happen again. It's part of the system and I accept the system."

Sutherland was raised in Pictou County, N.S., and has served congregations in Central Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. He has taken on many roles with the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces and with three Maritime presbyteries.

> 'It's been overwhelming. Usually I'd have four months to settle into the idea that this may happen'

An "avid outdoor enthusiast," Sutherland enjoys fishing, hunting, hiking, canoeing and snowmobiling in "some of the best landscape in the world." He and his wife, Irma, have two grown children and are "enjoying grandparenting," he said. "[Becoming moderator] is another step in the adventure."

"My experience of the last General Assembly was the most exciting of my ministry and I've been a minister for about 35 years," he said. "I've seen very positive developments. I know just by the circumstances of the changing Canadian demographics, we're going to go through a season of transition from what we've been to what we need to be in the future. I was delighted to see the strength, not only in what we are, but in the young leadership that's emerging. It's an exciting time to be in the Presbyterian Church.

"The hardships of today won't be wasted. There's a tremendous future ... In the Presbyterian Church, one of the strengths I celebrate is our wonderful diversity of experience and theology and personality. When we meet together most times, grace, kindness, gentleness and tender loving care take the forefront. That's outstanding. I believe that how we do things is just as important as what we do. I think that's part of the thrill of the last assembly: How much respect and care was expressed in the midst of differing opinions." ■

Connie Wardle is the Record's *senior staff writer.*

Community News

Rev. Dr. John Vissers was roasted and toasted by friends and colleagues at the Presbyterian College, Montreal, in November. He starts his new job at Knox College this month. He's seen here (centre) with his family, Jennifer, Joel, Lynn and Grant.

PWS&D Joins Campaign

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE and Development joined 37 other organizations in a campaign to reverse cuts to federally-funded international aid and development programs.

In March, the federal government announced they would be reducing the budget of the Canadian International Development Agency by 7.5 per cent over the next three years.

Members of the campaign are concerned the cuts could lead to setbacks in the fight against poverty.

"As citizens of Canada and especially as Christians, we should be concerned about our commitment to the world's poor," wrote PWS&D's director Ken Kim in an email to the *Record*. "The cuts put Canada to the bottom of the list of donor countries. ... Canada's reputation as a generous donor nation to the world's poor may be history."

Currently PWS&D receives CIDA funding for three-year maternal and newborn child health programs in Afghanistan and Malawi and a five-year livelihood program in Malawi. It also accesses CIDA funding as a member of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. While CIDA has not made it clear what programs may eventually be affected by the cuts, Kim said current PWS&D programs are not at risk.

In an effort to restore the CIDA budget, Kim said PWS&D is appealing to church members to join the campaign online at reversethecuts.ca and express their concern in letters to the prime minister.

The total of $380 million in cuts seems insignifcant compared the the cost of the F-35 fighter jets the government considered buying, said Kim.

"Turning swords into ploughshares is a biblical concept," he said. ■ —*Seth Veenstra*

WCC Rep visits PCC

REV. DR. HIELKE WOLTERS, associate secretary of Unity and Mission for the World Council of Churches, visited national offices in late November. He was in Toronto to attend a WCC meeting on just and inclusive communities and took the opportunity to visit member churches.

He met with several PCC representatives to discuss major issues facing the church in Canada and to discern the future of the WCC. Those that participated in the discussion were: Stephen Allen, associate secretary for Justice Ministries, Rev. Stephen Kendall, principal clerk of the General Assembly, Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency, Ken Kim, director Presbyterian World Service and Development, Barb Summers, associate secretary of Communications, Rev. Will Ingram, member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and minster of St. Andrew's King Street, Toronto, and Karen Plater, associate secretary of Stewardship. ■ —*Andrew Faiz*

Evangel Hall at 100

EVANGEL HALL MISSION is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2013. It is also launching a three-year campaign aimed at paying down its $3.5 million dollar mortgage.

At present, $283,000 a year is put toward mortgage payments, said Joseph Taylor, executive director of the street mission.

"The need is greater than it ever has been," he said. "The number of people coming to the drop-in has gone up about 40 per cent over the last few years. More people than ever are coming to the clinic looking for free dental care and health care because they can't afford it. If we can pay

PHOTO BY ANDREW FAIZ

Stan Raper of the Agriculture Workers Alliance hands a Canada Agricultural Workers Alliance Award to Kairos representatives Alfredo Barahona, Jennifer Henry, Adele Finney and Connie Sorio.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KAIROS

the mortgage down it would free up $283,000 a year for programming."

The mission moved from the site it had occupied for 93 years to a new facility in 2006.

The fundraising campaign, called Missions Close to Home, aims to encourage extra donations.

"This year we'd like to ask churches to target one per cent of their gross revenue for the campaign, and then fundraise [in addition]," Taylor said.

To find out more about EHM, visit evangelhall.ca. ■ —*Connie Wardle*

Kairos Honoured for Advocacy

KAIROS RECEIVED THE INAUGURAL Canada Agricultural Workers Alliance Award for their support of migrant farm workers.

The ecumenical social justice group was presented with the award in the 'community' category in November. Awards were also presented in media, political, and labour categories.

"We wanted to acknowledge the great work Kairos has done and show that the issue of temporary farm workers is not just a union issue, but a Canadian issue and a global issue," said Stan Raper, national co-ordinator for the Agriculture Workers Alliance, an organization funded by the United Food and Commercial Workers union.

Kairos's goal is "to create a clear path to permanent residency, provide funding and access to social services and ratify the United Nation's International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families," Alfredo Barahona, Kairos's lead staff person on migrant justice issues, told the *Record* in an email.

The Presbyterian Church has supported Kairos since it was founded in 2001. ■ —*SV*

Growing Outreach

IN THREE YEARS, St. John's outreach program to newcomers in Toronto has grown to an average of 45 to 50 participants.

"It's really taken off," said Laurie McGugan, an elder who is paid to co-ordinate the program. It attracts a diversity of ages, cultural backgrounds and levels of language understanding.

Monday Night in Canada, as the program is called, began after a member of the congregation recognized that, although there were a number of local ESL programs for newcomers, many were missing cultural cues learned in a more natural social setting.

While ESL programs' main focus is to improve participants' English, at St. John's that's secondary.

"Our intent is just to provide a welcome social environment—at which time you do improve your English," said McGugan.

"It's very simple: we have dinner and then we do activities you and I would consider regular ordinary activities for Canadians," said McGugan.

Examples include baking cookies, playing games, singing, dancing or watching movies.

"The only religious thing we do is say grace before the meal. We don't have the background intent of getting more people in church ... Our goal is just to show hospitality to this group of people in Toronto that are newcomers."

"The whole congregation was on board from the beginning," said McGugan, explaining how the goal of the program grew out of an intense period of long-range planning.

"Hospitality is one of the five pillars we wanted to act intentionally on.

"We want people to feel at home at St. John's so that they may feel at home with God and experience the presence of God here," said McGugan, quoting a visioning document the church published.

To put theory into practice they made their pastoral position half-time, freeing up the resources needed to hire McGugan and an education director.

"Hospitality is showing others the welcoming character of Jesus—opening up ourselves and our church to others." ■ —*SV*

Council Budgets for 2014

APPROVES PENSION PLAN CHANGES AND 'BUDGET PRINCIPLES'.

BY CONNIE WARDLE

THE ASSEMBLY COUNCIL spent the bulk of its November meeting dealing with finances. It endorsed a number of changes to the church's pension plan and approved a set of 10 "budget principles" to guide the creation of the national church's 2014 budget.

PENSION PLAN

Effective Jan. 1 of this year, contributions to the pension plan will increase for congregations, employees and employers.

Congregations will contribute five per cent of their dollar base (up from 3.1 per cent) to the pension fund, ministers and other employees will contribute nine per cent of their qualifying income (up from seven per cent), and employers will contribute nine per cent (also up from seven per cent).

A new formula will be used to determine future pension benefits. From Jan. 1 onward, benefits will be calculated using a 1.5 per cent career average formula. It will calculate the pension an employee has earned each year based on his or her salary in that year.

Under the previous final average formula, benefits were calculated based an employee's five highest earning years and the number of years he or she worked for the church.

The new calculation will result in lower benefits for most employees.

The old formula was frozen as of Dec. 31 and will be used to calculate benefits for preceeding years.

None of the changes will affect current retirees.

The steps are meant to "get us to July 2014," Tom Fisher, convener of the Pension and Benefits Board, told the Assembly Council.

The pension plan faces a solvency deficit of $48.7 million. The 2012 General Assembly granted the Council the power to make changes to the plan to address the funding shortfalls.

PRESBYTERIANS SHARING

"Continued membership decline and the need of congregations to contribute more to the pension fund and health and dental premiums dictate that it is prudent to reduce the Presbyterians Sharing income goal," the Council said in its budget principles.

> 'Our goal would certainly be higher than what we're currently bringing in, but it would be more achievable'

It set the budget of Presbyterians Sharing, the church's national mission and ministry fund, at $7.5 million for 2014. That is $500,000 less than the $8 million budgeted for 2013.

Donations to Presbyterians Sharing totaled $8.1 million in 2011 and 2010, and $8.5 million in 2009.

In principle, the Council also approved a new, simplified formula to calculate congregations' suggested allocations to Presbyterians Sharing. Based on the biblical idea of tithing, the formula would ask congregations to contribute 10 per cent of their revenue each year. It is expected to come before the General Assembly for approval.

"Our goal would certainly be higher than what we're currently bringing in, but it would be more achievable [than it has been in the past]," said Karen Plater, associate secretary of Stewardship. "If healthy congregations that can contribute 10 per cent actually do, we would meet the $8 million mark."

Currently, each congregation is asked to contribute 13 per cent of the first $50,000 of their dollar base, 18 per cent of the next $50,000 and 21.5 per cent of the remainder. The dollar base is calculated by taking the total amount received by a congregation for use in a given year and subtracting all money remitted for mission purposes and debt repayments.

BIENNIAL ASSEMBLIES

A meeting of the church's highest court costs almost $300,000, the Council said. The 2014 budget will be "prepared to accommodate either annual or biennial assemblies," so the General Assembly can decide whether to meet each year or every other year in the future.

It noted technology could be used in "gathering information and handling governance" and some changes would have to be made to current processes "to ensure timely responses."

The church considered moving to biennial assemblies two years ago. In its report to the 2010 General Assembly, the Council suggested "there has not been sufficient support for the proposed pattern of biennial assemblies, particularly from presbyteries, to proceed with the proposal."

COLLEGE GRANTS

Instead of calculating grants to the three theological colleges based on the national church's revenue each year, the 2014 budget is expected to set a fixed dollar amount. The grants will be reviewed in consultation with the colleges periodically and "will help the

colleges prepare their budgets based on a fixed amount which guarantees stable funding to insulate them from wide fluctuations in the national church's revenue stream," the Council said.

Following the discussions of the 2014 budget—which occurred without media present—the Council approved an additional motion: "That the finance committee in consultation with the colleges explore whether or not it is good stewardship of our resources and financially astute to support three theological colleges."

"I think it is time for the church to consider whether it needs three colleges or two colleges or one college," said Rev. Dr. John Vissers, theGeneral Assembly moderator and then principal of Presbyterian College, Montreal. "My vision for the church is for one first class theological college."

Vissers began work as director of academic programs at Knox College, Toronto, on Jan 1.

"I don't think a decision of this magnitude affecting the future of this church should be made solely for financial reasons," said Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris, dean of St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver. He suggested the finance committee should "do some of the spade work" with the colleges and report to a future General Assembly. "I would see this as a preliminary motion to establish some of the basic facts, to lead to a wider process to be established by the General Assembly." ■

The online version of this article includes a link to the Council's budget principles.

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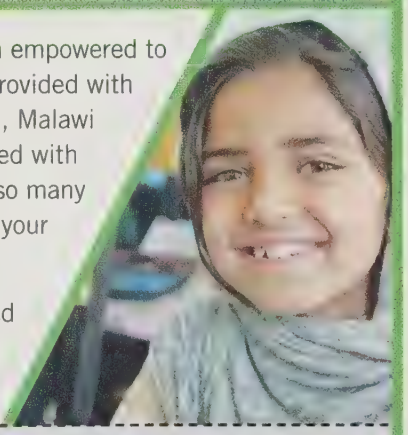

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Novel Bibles & Reality TV

SOME INSPIRATION AND SILLINESS. **BY BRAD CHILDS**

A NEW BIBLE

Thomas Nelson, the world's largest publisher of the King James Bible, has a new addition to its scripture line up. *The Voice* is a new kind of Bible "translation" that works more like a paraphrase and is intended to be read like a novel. In the publisher's words, "*The Voice* helps people connect with scripture, so it can impact their lives." A good sample of what this looks like comes from Luke 10:41-42 where Jesus says, "Oh Martha, Martha, you are so anxious and concerned about a million details, but really, only one thing matters. Mary has chosen that one thing, and I won't take it away from her." The feel is more narrative, more engaging, and less formal.

FIND IT @ **hearthevoice.com**

Big Daddy Weave performs at a Christmas concert.

'REALITY' TV

Having grown up in an Amish community, I'd say I have a pretty good grasp of what Amish life is like. For most people, however, it's source of curiosity. And wherever people are curious about the lives of other people, a reality TV show will make money off of it. In the Turner Learning Channel's new hit show, *Breaking Amish*, cameras follow five Amish/Mennonite youths as they move to and live in New York City. Personally I find the whole thing a bit sad. It seems somewhat like a game show played with people's lives and faith. At the same time, it is pretty interesting.

FIND IT @ **tlc.howstuffworks.com/tv/breaking-amish**

MUSIC

Big Daddy Weave is a Christian band from Mobile, Alabama, that's growing in popularity. Composed of Mike and Jay Weaver and friends Jeremy Redmon, Joe Shirk and Jeff Jones, the band has been together for over 10 years. But I think they are just coming into their own. Known previously for songs like *Fields of Grace* and *Every Time I Breathe*, the band released a new Christmas album in 2012. But it's not Christmas music I'm interested in; it's the song *Love Come to Life*. I think it makes them a whole new band and I like this new band a lot.

FIND IT @ **bigdaddyweave.com**

CRAZINESS

Have you ever thought to yourself, "If I have a baby boy he'll need to be circumcised, but I don't want to mess with some silly physician or have to find parking at some big hospital?" Nope, me neither. But it appears some people have because there's an entire industry of do-it-yourself home circumcision kits. If you really want to know more you can Google it; but be warned, the visuals are disturbing.

Rev. Brad Childs is minister at First, Regina.

Excited About Stories

DIANA BUTLER BASS ADDRESSES CHURCH DECLINE AT PRESBYTERY EVENT. **BY SETH VEENSTRA**

"The line of hope and fear runs right through the middle of all of us," Diana Butler Bass told the 250-plus audience.

"Let me read you a poem," she said, turning to her iPad.

"There is a trough in waves
A low spot
Where horizon disappears
And only sky
And water
Are our company. ...
And there we may drown
If we let fear
Hold us within its grip and shake us
Side to side,
And leave us flailing, torn, disoriented."

Fear is a natural response to change in the church, she explained after finishing Judy Brown's *Trough*. Especially when you look at the numbers —membership is in decline, buildings are being closed, budgets cut. As we fight the current we try to get our bearings. Yet we find our surroundings unfamiliar. At times we can't even locate the horizon. What might have once been seen as a "dominant Christian backdrop" has faded from view.

"But don't judge the waves," said Butler Bass. "Just note the shape of things."

Invited by the Hamilton presbytery to speak at a two-day event in November, the renowned writer and church historian spent four hours unpacking the thesis of her new book *Christianity Beyond Religion*. North American faith has undergone a radical transformation, reshaping Christianity "by emphasizing relationships, practices, and experience that connects people to a deeper awareness of self, to their neighbour in global community, and to God."

Diana Butler Bass speaks at Knox, Dundas, Ont.

PHOTO BY SETH VEENSTRA

'Faith can never insulate nor prevent change. Instead faith is swept up in the waves of global change'

After two lecture periods in the tightly packed sanctuary at Knox, Dundas, Ont., and a time for small group discussions, attendees returned to the sanctuary for an extended question and answer period. Most questions focused on the future of mainline denominations.

"The question of denominational life in the future is one of the top two or three questions I've been asked since the publication of *Christianity for the Rest of Us* [in 2006]. My answer remains the same: I have no idea. Though I do have a couple more tools to help us think about what the church could be," said Butler Bass.

One of the tools she used was the metaphor of climate change. Inspired by Bill McKibben's *Eaarth*, a book that, like it's title suggests, argues we are living on a new planet transformed by climate change, Butler Bass used polls, surveys, stats and other data to give attendees an idea of the regional and global climate in which the church is situated. The shift is so extensive "every aspect of human experience is undergoing profound rearrangement," she argued. And that includes faith; while it may be a holy thing, faith exists in the context of the world.

"Faith can neither insulate nor prevent change. Instead faith is swept up in the waves of global change," she writes in *Christianity Beyond Religion*.

"The 1970s were the beginning of the end of older forms of ➤

'The church is not here for the sake of the church. The church is here for the sake of the world. And if we're not really responding to the world around us then we're just perpetuating our institution'

Christianity, and now, decades later, we are witnessing the end of the beginning."

We live now in a climate of "spirituality," where dogma, rules, and external authority are replaced by conviction, practices and personal experience. "Spirituality" is not the most descriptive term, she admitted, but "we haven't found the right word yet." By spirituality she means "experience that connects one to a deeper sense of self and the divine—wherein authority is validated by internal sources."

While we may be in the midst of a new awakening, the emphasis on experiential faith is not new in Christian history. And yet, the church is continually re-awakened to the experience of belief—a word Butler Bass said is less about what a person thinks and more about how their heart affirms what they trust to be true.

In the past, the Great Awakenings may have shared a renewal of experiential faith, yet each Awakening had its own distinct characteristic or insight—prayer, preaching, miracles, or a thirst for social justice. In this new period, spirituality is the defining characteristic pushing faith-seekers beyond religion into new territory.

So where do denominations fit into this new world? Well, first we need to know what a denomination is, said Butler Bass. "It's something we assume we know, but I'm not entirely convinced we know the answer to that question. If a denomination is a set of structures, corporate headquarters and a denominational publishing house, a seminary and some rule books, then I can pretty well guarantee that it's going out of business.

"But if a denomination is a community of people who are bearers of a particular kind of Christian memory who embody that memory in practice and form communities based around those practices, to see that tradition in a meaningful way into the world, well, then I think we might have something more for us."

By reorienting our identity we are reminded of our mission. "The church is not here for the sake of the church. The church is here for the sake of the world. And if we're not really responding to the world around us then we're just perpetuating our institution, not fulfilling what the church is for," said Rev. Cathy Stewart, a member of the presbytery's futures task force.

Church decline is scary, admits Butler Bass; yet "instead of blaming decline on X, Y, or Z, let's think about what the surrounding cultural climate is that can support the life of congregations and how those congregations can relate well to the world around them."

It's better to look at "congregational vitality" than try to pinpoint the reasons for decline. "You can find statistics blaming the decline of mainline congregations on pretty much everything." said Butler Bass. It's better to build vibrant congregations where members "develop rich and meaningful connections with those around them."

However, "for the future to come, you have to say 'goodbye. You have to think: 'What is it you are trying to save?'

"If the whole thing burns down, what do you want your grandchildren to have in the future that embodies the memory of this thing now? Do you want to pass on a bunch of empty buildings full of cobwebs, where you have to fix the roofs and pay the expensive heating bills? Or do you want them to remember the stories?"

"I get excited about stories. That's the stuff that matters and will matter a hundred years from now."■

Seth Veenstra is the Record*'s staff writer.*

Jesus at His Word

TONY CAMPOLO ON YOUTH AND THE ROLE OF MAINLINE DENOMINATIONS. **BY SETH VEENSTRA**

Tony Campolo is a "Red Letter Christian." And it's a badge he's proud to wear. In many Bibles, the words of Jesus are highlighted in red ink. And for good reason, Campolo argues. Jesus' radical words should be taken seriously.

A fixture of American Christian culture for some time now, Campolo is a regular guest on network television, the author of more than 35 books, and a speaker with an unrelenting tour schedule.

Yet despite his considerable influence, he refuses to align himself with left- or right-wing politics, preferring a non-partisan position that engages and critiques both sides. "Jesus refuses to fit into any of our political ideologies," writes Campolo.

He also describes himself as evangelical, but not in the usual understanding of the word. Aware that for many, evangelical suggests either a narrow-minded fundamentalism or avoidance of the cares of the world, Campolo champions "progressive evangelism" where committed, personal relationships with Jesus lead Christians to action. Red Letter Christianity is meant to be a non-denominational extension of this theology.

Last summer while Campolo was in Canada for the All Ontario Youth Convention, the *Record* interviewed him over the phone. The following are excerpts from the conversation.

Tony Campolo

PHOTO COURTESY OF TONY CAMPOLO

ON ENGAGING YOUTH IN CHURCH LIFE:

If we lose this generation of young people, we will lose them not because we have made following Jesus too hard for them; it's because we've made it too easy.

It seems to me the church has tried to hold on to young people by providing higher and higher levels of entertainment. And the reality is the world offers more interesting entertainment than the church can ever offer.

If we think we can hold on to them by entertaining them, we are competing against a society with such high intensities of entertainment that we lose the game. On the other hand, if we call people to radical commitment then in fact they will find themselves very intrigued by the possibilities.

The church is failing to attract young people because they know that the church is not about to take Jesus seriously. What I mean by that is what Gandhi said: "Everybody knows what Jesus taught except Christians."

The reason why the clergy are not about to propagate what Jesus obviously teaches—especially concerning economic lifestyle, i.e. living simply so others might simply live—is because the clergy themselves are not willing to make the kind of commitment that living simply requires. In short, the simple lifestyle is obviously prescribed by Christ and other places in scripture: 1 John 3:17-18. If you have this world's goods—and most Canadian Presbyterians do—and you see brothers and sisters who are in need and you keep what you have while they suffer how can you say you have the love of God in ypur heart?

I think that at this particular juncture of history young people are quite willing to make sacrifices—not for the institutional church, but to help the poor. If the church begins to plead with young people to help the poor, they will find a great response.

Young people believe the church should be the only club in the world that exists for the benefit of its non-members. When you're asking young people to become committed to the church is it because we want the church as an institution to survive? Or are we calling young people to become committed to the church because the church can organize them to work among the poor and the oppressed of the world more effectively? ➤

If we lose this generation of young people, we will lose them not because we have made following Jesus in this day and age too hard for them; it's because we've made it too easy

ON THE STATE OF MAINLINE CHURCHES:

I think that the failure of mainline churches specifically is that they have lost the capacity to ask people to make radical commitments to the work of Christ.

To divorce becoming a Christian from service is in fact one of the great mistakes that we [in mainline churches] have made. We have divorced a kind of personal relationship with the resurrected Christ from the work that churches have to do.

Everything I'm saying in this interview is aimed at one thing: How to save mainline denominations, which are hemorrhaging their membership, as you know. [We must save them] for these reasons: Only the mainline denominations have had the guts to take moral and biblical stands on the controversial issues of our day. Would the Civil Rights Movement have had the momentum it needed without the support of mainline churches?

We cannot afford to let mainline churches die. Social progress depends on them. They have been and continue to be, even in their weakening condition, the conscience of a nation.

ON THE EMERGENT CHURCHES:

Shane Claiborne, myself and others who have been speaking to the emerging churches, have been saying these things:

First, beware of your pharisaical condemnations. We're tired of you looking at the institutional churches and condemning them.

Number two: If it wasn't for the institutional church, you wouldn't even exist. Who is it that delivered the scriptures into your hands? The institutional church. Who is it that defined basic doctrines like the Apostles' Creed? You wouldn't be saying the things you are saying unless you were raised in the institutional church. So let's face it; you are an offspring [of mainline churches].

It is reported that St. Augustine once said, "The church is a whore, but she's my mother." That great statement on the one hand acknowledges the unfaithfulness of the institutional church, on the other hand it acknowledges the church is the mother that has given birth and nurtures those in the emergent church.

There needs to be conversations with the emergent church. And we must not patronize ... we need to sit down and ask the question: What do you find lacking in our mainline denomination, and what do you think we can do to address the concerns that caused you to slip away from our fold? Because we're not going to quit; we're not going to shut the doors.

We have to be listening. And in return we also have to be free with our criticism. They have to listen to us. The emergent church has a strong capacity to go off into directions that historically have proven to be detrimental. The young people who are part of these emergent church groups act as though the things they are saying have never been said before.

The reality is the church has been around for 2,000 years and there isn't much you can raise in the way of new doctrines, new criticisms that haven't already come out.

It is the task of the mainline churches to be a critiquing body that says, 'what you're suggesting here has already been suggested, this is where it has led in the history of the church.' The history of the church has often been ignored by the emergent church movements. We need to help the emergent churches to be doctrinally sound and to be aware of where they could go if they do not heed what history can teach them.

[For example], I think the mistakes of the past in a more contemporary setting would be this: In the early part of the 20th century the so-called "social gospel" broke loose in Canada and in the United States. And the social gospel said that the winning of persons to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is a secondary interest. Our primary interest is transforming the social structure of the systems so they are more just and do more to eliminate the oppression of the poor and the needy.

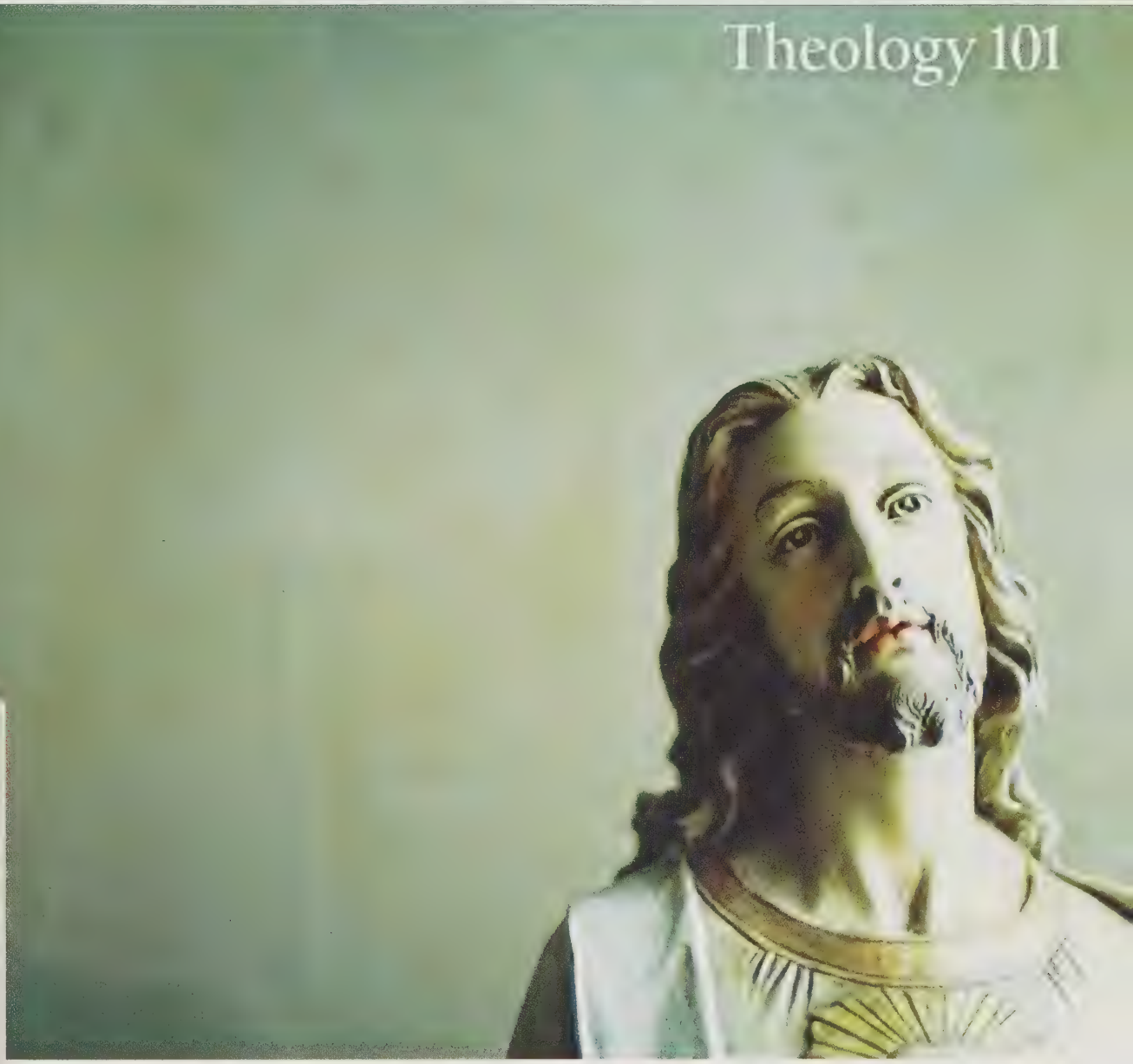
They were half right; we do need to address the structures. But insofar as the church drifted away from calling people to a total surrender to the Holy Spirit and infilling of the Spirit, the church ended up going in two directions. The net result is you get some people who have left mainline churches to join charismatic churches or fundamentalist churches because they wanted—here's the word—to feel the presence of Christ in their lives. And insofar as that has happened it has left those who have neglected that dimension of the gospel only freer to do their neglecting.

It seems to me that the merger of a strong social conscience as articulated by the social gospel and the kind of evangelism promoted by Billy Graham—the merger of those two is absolutely essential if mainline churches are to survive.

The heresy of the social gospel is not what they said, but what they didn't say. ■

Seth Veenstra is the Record*'s staff writer.*

Theology 101



OUR FEATURE ON LIVING FAITH

Living Faith is a declaration of faith of the Presbyterian Church. You can download it at presbyterian.ca. We suggest you read the passage being discussed each month.

ADDITIONAL READING: The Note of Victory and Giddy Confusion (April 2011) and Solas, Not Solos (September 2011). The articles can be found at presbyterianrecord.ca.

Saviour and Lord

JESUS HAS BRIDGED THE CHASM OF SIN. **BY JEFF LOACH**

LIVING FAITH 3.4 AND 3.5 (JESUS IS SAVOUR AND JESUS IS LORD)

In Living Faith, sections 3.4 and 3.5, our subordinate standard speaks of Jesus in his roles as our Saviour and our Lord. These roles are pivotal to the Christian faith. Indeed, the earliest creed of the church was simply this: Jesus is Lord. He is Lord because he is Saviour. The two go hand in hand.

When we profess faith in the context of the Christian church, we claim Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, using words that, in varying ways, reflect the dual nature of our changed relationship with the Triune God. What does it mean to call Jesus Saviour and Lord?

To receive Jesus as our Saviour is to ➤

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

We do well not to overlook the reality of human sin, nor to dismiss it. If we were not sinners, Jesus would have died for no reason

accept that while we were estranged from God, Jesus has bridged the chasm of sin that separated us from God. Many know John 3:16, wherein we are reminded that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son; to receive Jesus as Saviour is to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that by God's grace we are among those for whom God gave His Son. To receive Jesus as Saviour is to trust that Jesus has atoned for our sins by his death on the cross.

The verb "to atone" has a variety of theological layers to it, but I like to explain it by breaking up the word. To atone is to make "at one." I was separated from God; now I am united with God because Jesus has saved me, personally, from the sin which kept me from a full and complete relationship with the One who cannot look upon sin.

We do well not to overlook the reality of human sin, nor to dismiss it. If we were not sinners, Jesus would have died for no reason. No, even a casual glance at the news, or an attempt to parent a two-year-old, will remind us that sin is a significant reality in our world. We need salvation from sin.

Living Faith tells us that Jesus died for our sins, and that this reconciled us to God. This is God's own self-sacrifice, offered in love. It happens by "God's grace, received by faith alone," which "pardons and justifies, redeems and reconciles us" (3.4.3).

Of course, we know this is not the end of the story: Jesus also rose again from the dead. His resurrection is what makes him Lord—Lord of life, Lord over death. When we receive Jesus as Saviour, by God's grace, we are invited to name him Lord of our lives.

This is an important step of faith, one that we do well not to miss. As 3.5.3 reminds us, we continue in a battle, day by day, against the forces of the evil one. When we call Jesus "Lord," we show our true allegiance, and are able to receive encouragement for the battle of life. We tell all who will hear that we have been made at one with God, restored in the relationship, and that we do not do battle alone: God is for us, because Jesus has restored us.

Living Faith shows us, in part, what this means—that we must respond through waiting, worship, praise and prayer (3.5.3-4). These are acts of submission. When we name Jesus as Lord, we are acknowledging that he is in control, rather than we ourselves. That's a big challenge for us. We start our lives as helpless babies, and work through our youth to be in control of our lives, only to have Jesus ask for that control.

Think about it this way. I don't have a pilot's licence. If I were given the option of flying a plane instead of being a passenger, I'd sooner take the middle seat in the back row, because nobody's safe if I'm in the captain's seat. It's beyond my ability to control an aircraft. Likewise, who should really control my life—me, with 40-odd years of experience, or Jesus, the second person of the Trinity incarnate, who knows all things and has experienced all time and space? Jesus, take the wheel!

Living Faith challenges us not only to accept the peace and security that comes from being saved eternally by Jesus's sacrifice on the cross, but to give Jesus control—Lordship—of our lives, so that we can be used by him to accomplish his purposes for the world he loves. When I was in church membership classes, my pastor's wife said, "You were saved to serve, not sit and sour." In other words, when we receive Jesus as Saviour, and name him as Lord, even though we surrender control, we can still act on the faith we profess. Having our sin atoned for is worthy of a response of faith, and of faith in action. We can work to make a difference in the world that God so loved, and still loves, so that God's kingdom may come on earth, just as it is in heaven. ■

Rev. Dr. Jeff Loach is pastor of St. Paul's, Nobleton, Ont., and an adjunct instructor in spiritual theology at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto. His blog, Passionately His, *can be found on the* Record's *website.*

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The Joy of the Lord

A COMMUNITY TAKES A RISK ON GOD'S WORD. **BY LAURENCE DEWOLFE**

Third Sunday after Epiphany
January 27

Nehemiah 7:73b – 8:12

Shake off the cold hand of the lectionary editors and read what they cut off and cut out. That includes names of some of our ancestors in faith. The edited version makes Ezra's leadership a solo act. It diminishes the role of the community. The people stage this New Year's Day celebration. They even build a stage (verse 4). The full version tells of the community's reception of, and response to the word of God. Ezra, priest and scribe, with the help of the Levites, responds to the community's call.

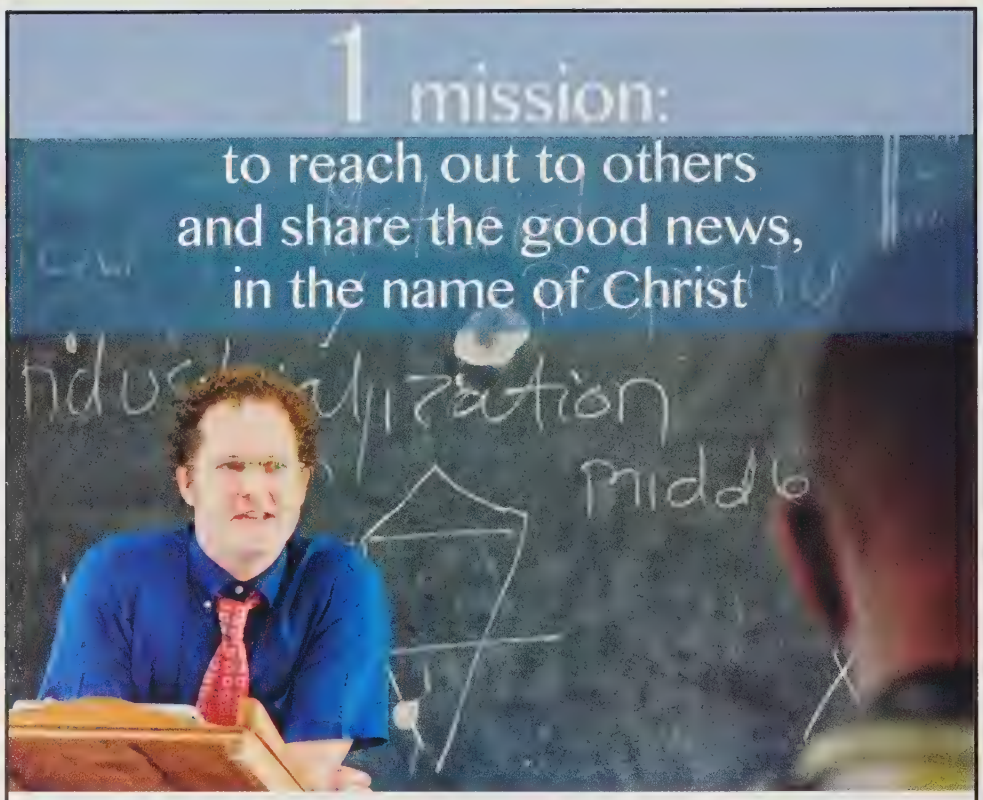
The restored people of Israel reenact a key event from the story of the hero-king Josiah (2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34). That public renewal in the Law resulted in great grief. After sins and failures are mourned (verse 9) this day ends in rejoicing and charity (verse 12).

The walls of the city are rebuilt. The gates are open. The temple is restored. Society is reorganized. Leadership is established. Markets are open. People have homes. Now what? How do we live? We must live by the word of God!

Here's why it's so important to read those lists of names and keep on to the end of the story. Verse four tells us who stands with Ezra. Maybe they're his deputies, there to spell him off. There's a lot to read. Maybe they're community leaders, there to show this is an act of and for all the people. Verse nine doesn't make sense without verse seven. Levites, temple servants descended from Aaron, translate the Hebrew to Aramaic and help the people take the words home (verse 11).

Maybe the lectionary editors thought it was good enough to stop at verse 10 and give us "the joy of the Lord is your strength" to ponder. But those words beg too many questions. What does this joy look like? What does it lead to? How do we show it? Verse 12 tells us the people go home, and act on the instructions they've received. They make great rejoicing because they understand! ➤

ILLUSTRATION: ISTOCK PHOTO



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The joy of the Lord dawns on us when we discover we can do what God wants us to do. The joy of the Lord overflows in celebration and sharing. We find strength when we get to work, together, in joyful response to the word.

Karl Barth drew a picture of a pastor on Sunday morning, looking out the vestry window to see people walking determinedly across the town square toward church. One question burns in their hearts: "Is it true?"

Thomas Long says we should hold onto that picture today. But the burning question is: "Will it work?" The people who gather to hear Ezra read the Law already believe it's true. They rejoice when they see how it can work in their lives.

I know a few preachers read my words. Preacher, these words are for you. It's been awhile since I've written to you. Hold the image of Ezra, up on that platform, answering the call of the people to renew their relationship with God and their knowledge of God's word. Hold Barth's image, dated as it is, of the eager congregation streaming toward the church building, and the pulpit inside. Remember Tom Long's reframing of the question. The people who come and trust you to preach want to know it will work.

Ezra had 13 Levites to help get the message to the people. Maybe the 13 who stood with him helped, too. (That detail reminds me of a session on Communion Sunday. Up front, not to watch and judge, but to serve.) For all intents and purposes you're on your own. With the word.

The words may be yours, but the word of God is theirs. You don't own it any more than they do, but they do. They give the word to you so they can understand. Don't just tell them, show them. It works. ■

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe is on sabbatical from the Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Free to Love

GETTING PERSONAL WITH JESUS. **BY NANCY BEATTIE**

As a teenager I was often dragged to church, but even so my faith was strong. I was comfortable knowing that God was distant but present.

A high school friend asked me, "How can you love science and still believe in God?"

For me the answer was clear. I had begun to grasp a simple truth. The more I learned, the less I knew. There's mystery in that; a kind of expansive, unknowable, mind-blowing mystery. I accepted the mystery by allowing it to permeate my consciousness without analysis. Back in high school, I recognized the limits of my mind.

Fifteen years later I found myself in a pressure cooker. My husband and I had constructed our lives around children, but there was one problem. We weren't conceiving. A couple of years in, we finally went to a fertility clinic.

"Everything is fine," we were told, "just keep on trying."

And so we did. With nothing to hang our grief on, we kept trying. I was working in a job I hated, with no control over the realization of my deepest desire. Most critically, I had no coping skills for that level of stress. I lacked the ability to express my heartache and that deficiency kept my mind spinning in circles, like a hamster on a wheel.

"I should be grateful," I'd tell myself. "I ➤

I talked with a psychologist and began the task of learning to express my feelings: The task of strengthening the bridge to my heart

should be grateful for my husband, for my house. I should be grateful for my health, and even my dog!"

The mind, I discovered, is not designed for that kind of burden. It needs a regular break. And since I was in no position to give it one, it made an executive decision to take one. I was hospitalized for a psychotic break from reality. Through that dark time, I never lost hope. God was there. Distant but present.

By way of a very basic schedule, the hospital staff mediated the reintroduction of my heart and mind. Gradually, a peaceful reconnection was made and a bridge was built between the two. After two weeks I was released and soon after, my father was diagnosed with cancer. He deteriorated very quickly. But because I had learned to slow down, I was able to accompany him during the last months of his life. We spent many hours together, often not talking, just enjoying one another's company. There are few things more sacred than comfortable silence.

The thoughts that came rushing in after his death threatened to, once again, unravel the core of me. So I talked with a psychologist and began the task of learning to express my feelings: The task of strengthening the bridge to my heart.

More than a year later, we adopted a child. We had been blessed! God was there, as always. Distant but present.

The process of adopting a second child, with special needs, made me realize that I needed a spiritual practice. Right around that time we learned of a house church, investigated and joined. That little house church was special. It was intimate and exactly what we needed, except ... the leaders kept talking about Jesus! Somehow concentrating on Jesus made things personal, and brought my own flaws into sharp focus. It was an extremely frustrating time. My brain kept telling me to run but I didn't for one reason.

The grace I felt from those leaders.

About six months later, we brought our second child home. She was welcomed into that small community with open arms. It was a wonderful time. Since then, we've been blessed by a larger, equally intimate church community. And by getting to know Jesus, I can have a relationship with God. I've never had a relationship with God before. He's close now, and I feel more supported. More loved. More accepted.

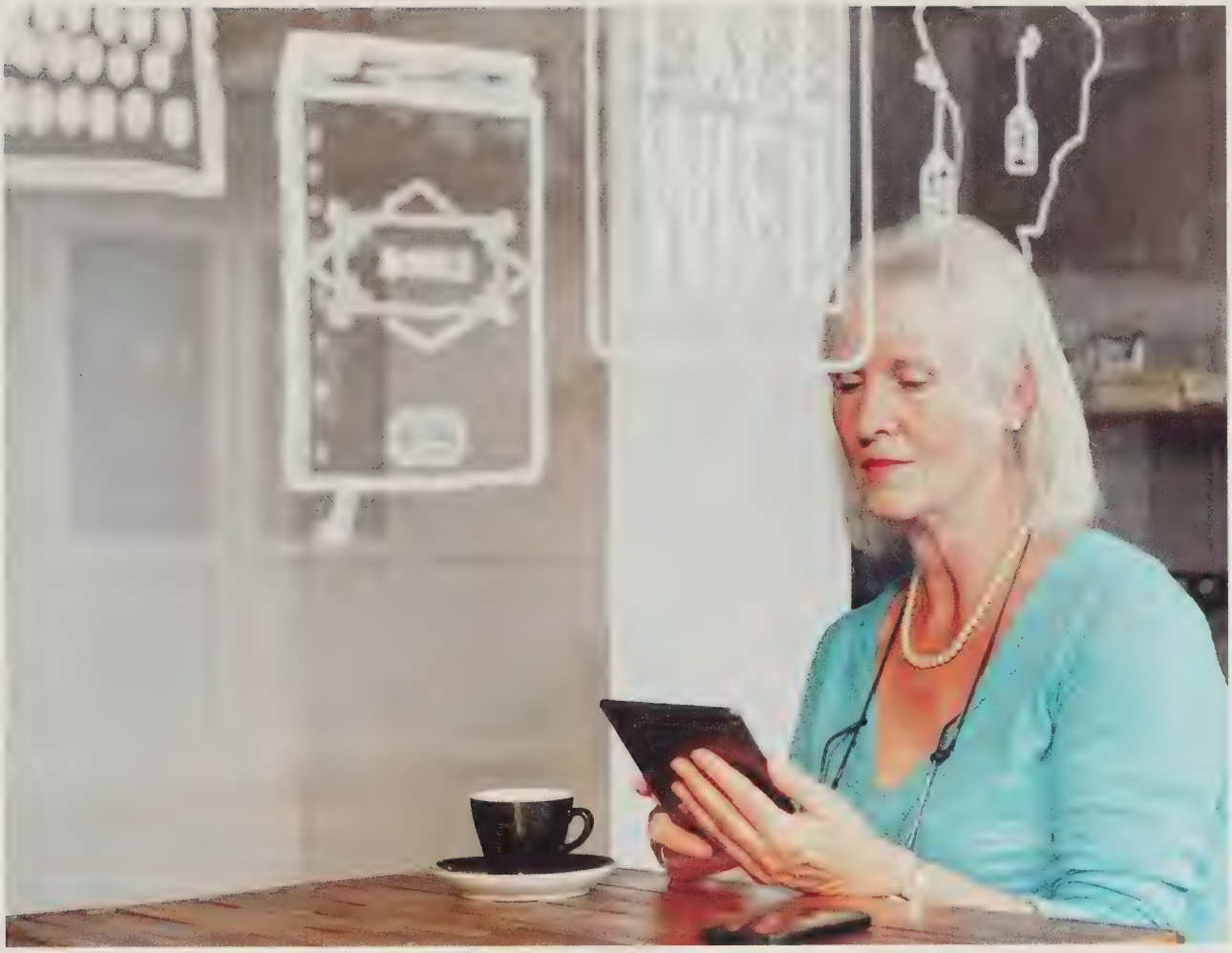
In those moments when my mind-heart bridge is strong, the mysteries of life are allowed to, once again, permeate my consciousness without analysis. Somehow that bridge provides a space where transformation can take place; a space where the grace of God can enter.

I'm loved just as I am. There's nothing for me to do. All those shoulds—the ones that drove me mad—they're gone.

I'm forgiven, and I'm free to love. ■

Nancy Beattie is a member of Briarwood, Beaconsfield, Que.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



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Technology and the Call

A SEARCH COMMITTEE USES EMAIL, WORD, SKYPE AND YOUTUBE.

BY CHARLES CLINE

With the retirement of our minister in the summer of 2011, Knox, Vernon, B.C., found itself facing the challenge of selecting a new minister. Following the guidelines established by the Presbyterian Church, presbytery appointed an interim moderator, Rev. David Heath, and a search committee was established. Now what?

During our first meeting we discovered that all the committee members had email addresses and we were somewhat computer savvy. Heath suggested we should use technology as much as possible.

I don't think he realized how beneficial this decision would be.

These are the software programs and specific hardware that we used: We started with email, Microsoft Word and Excel as our software choices, plus Google, YouTube and Skype. These common programs and websites are available to everyone.

Hardware components we found useful were a laptop with a built in camera, a colour printer, a cable to link the laptop to a large screen TV and a Lazy Susan.

We made extensive use of the resources provided by the Presbyterian Church's website; in particular the guide to calling a minister. We found it very easy to cut and paste text from the PDF files.

EMAIL

Email was used to receive and to transmit all correspondence with applicable attachments between search committee members and, as we found to our surprise, all candidates.

Remember to set up a master mailbox titled ➤

Canada is so vast, it is too expensive to interview candidates in person and a conference telephone call does not give you that personal touch. Some committee members had been using Skype ... we decided we should try this tool

Search Committee with sub-mailboxes to track correspondence rather than dumping it all in one folder. Sub-mailbox examples are Agenda and Meeting Minutes, Forms Development, *Presbyterian Record*, Correspondence, etc. Remember the greater the breakdown of mailboxes the easier it is to find that email you were looking for.

MICROSOFT WORD

We started with the sample congregational self analysis questions as we developed our own survey. We copied this PDF file into Word and forwarded it to all committee members as an attachment to an email.

Each committee member would then save the document and review it, making his or her comments and recommendations in a different colour. Upon completion they would return their revised document to the secretary, who would recap all recommendations on Version 1 and print it on a colour printer for discussion at our next meeting. The decisions we reached would be itemized in Version 2 and the process would be repeated until a final document was arrived at. We found this process took three revisions.

Armed with our congregational self analysis questions, we reviewed the congregational profile form for applicable questions.

The survey was now ready.

MICROSOFT EXCEL

When we had our completed congregational surveys, we used Excel to capture all the information they provided.

A sample of our congregational survey recap worksheet is available at presbyterianrecord.ca as part of this article. Five sheets were used to capture the data and they are in the same order as our congregational survey. To assist you we have keyed in the results of 10 fictitious surveys. If you visualize that data collected from 150 surveys, the screens get rather lengthy. That is where the hide row feature in Excel comes in handy, as you are only interested in the final numbers applicable to those questions.

With all information provided by the congregational survey captured on the Excel spreadsheet, we found it very easy to complete the statistical data portion of the congregational profile form.

(Also, this single document full of detailed information can prove to be beneficial to the session and the incoming minister.)

SEARCH PROCESS

With all documents ready to be attached to emails, community web links identified for applicants and ads placed in the *Record*, we could start receiving inquiries from candidates.

The interim moderator suggested that we use technology as much as possible with the candidates. Correspondence would be done electronically and sermons would be received preferably as DVDs. Little did we realize some candidates were ahead of us by posting their sermons on YouTube.

To manage the volume of correspondence with the candidates we found it necessary to develop another spreadsheet to track documents dispatched and received.

A sample of our candidate tracking spreadsheet is also online.

This spreadsheet proved to be most beneficial as we could see the current status of all candidates on one page. Remember you can use the column sort feature to organize the information the way you want it.

INTERVIEW

When we decided whom we would like to interview, our next question was how.

Canada is so vast, it is too expensive to interview candidates in person and a conference telephone call does not give you that personal touch.

Some committee members had been using Skype to keep in touch with relatives and we decided we should try this tool.

A drawback was the laptop's small screen, which was difficult for the group to look at. A quick trip to the computer store revealed we could connect a laptop, which has a built in camera, directly to a large screen TV with an inexpensive cable. We were in business.

By placing the laptop on a Lazy Susan we could turn it to focus on the person asking the question or responding to an inquiry. I wonder if presbytery should try this for some of its meetings?

PREACH FOR THE CALL

With the candidate selected, next they would have to preach for the call. Again technology came into play: travel arrangements were made, flights were booked, accommodation was arranged, itinerary set, etc., all completed with the aid of the computer.

Ain't technology grand! ■

Charles Cline is a lifelong Presbyterian active in Knox, Vernon, B.C. He chairs the board of managers and the Knox Fellowship Group, and served as secretary of the search committee.

IMAGE COURTESY OF GWYNETH WHILSMITH

The Grand Ladies

OLD FRIENDS BID FAREWELL TO A 25-YEAR TRADITION. **BY GWYNETH WHILSMITH**

Twenty-five years ago, two busy friends who rarely had time to visit decided to sneak away for a few days of catch-up time. It was my friend Helen Sinclair who suggested we go to Crieff Hills Retreat and Conference Centre, south of Guelph, Ont., and ask four other friends to accompany us.

We rented the House of the Dove, a lovely 1870s stone farmhouse. The weather was perfect and we felt we had dropped into Paradise. We talked, laughed, slept, walked the lovely paths in the woods and discovered the little chapel for quiet time.

We invited six other friends to join us the following year. Thus it became our happy habit to return every spring, the new friends inviting other friends. In a few years we had 24 people—the maximum allowed in the Dove House. Some of us scrambled up on the top bunks and all happily shared two bathrooms. In our second year we began the practice of one of us choosing a topic for Bible study and discussion.

The Grand Ladies of Crieff were born. That name may sound a bit presumptuous, but many of us were grandparents and the Grand Ladies sounded a lot better than the Old Ladies, so that's the name that stuck.

Each year it felt like coming home. One night the good women of nearby Duff's Presbyterian prepared a sumptuous turkey meal for us. One of our members, Donna Wilson, a gourmet cook, often created a full course beef dinner. Our bodies were fed well, but so were our souls. The study and discussions grew deeper and more soul searching every year as we shared openly with each other about the ups and downs of our faith. Often, we invited someone who had special expertise to speak to us, stretching our minds on many different subjects.

One night was always set aside as "fun night." Old snapshots attest to the outrageous highs (or lows) we went to as we put on ridiculous skits that made us laugh until our sides ached.

As the years went by, those top bunks in our beloved Dove House seemed to get higher and higher until we decided to move to St. Luke's Lodge, with its two beds and a bath per room. We took all our meals in the Old School House, which is now a dining room.

We've formed enduring friendships. Our numbers were rarely lower than 20, and you might say we were a motley crew—housewives, office workers, teachers, nurses, a magistrate and other professionals. At least three denominations were represented, but once we checked into Crieff Hills, we were all the same: women who knew the value of Christian friends no matter where they came from, who they were or what ➤

church they attended.

Sandra Barker summed it up well: "It was a blessing to have a time apart from all the pressures of family, community and church and to meet wonderful women I would otherwise never have come to know."

Hilda Verbeek, our guitarist and a potter of note, remarked: "My time with the Grand Ladies of Crieff has shaped me in many ways just as a potter does with clay. The women came with their unique personalities and gifts and my friendships with them often challenged me to view things in a different way. "

Last April we celebrated our 25th anniversary. Sadly, only two of us, Helen Sinclair and I, were there from the original six. We were a lot older than when we started. Four have died and in their memory we held a candlelight service.

After an in-depth and honest discussion, we decided the time had come to put the Grand Ladies of Crieff to bed. Of course we were sad, but there was joy, too, as we remembered our privileged days at Crieff Hills. We agreed to mark that time by donating a garden bench for others to sit on in some quiet, sheltered spot on the grounds.

'The women came with their unique personalities and gifts and my friendships with them often challenged me to view things a different way'

We concluded with a communion service under the leadership of the Rev. Kathryn Strachan and gave thanks to God for Crieff Hills Community and Retreat Centre. It had changed our lives, stretched our minds, and deepened our faith

In 1950 Col. John Maclean, founder of *Maclean's* magazine, dreamed that the 250 acres at Crieff would be "a model and example to other communities." Others will follow and discover Crieff Hills for themselves; Col. John Maclean's dream of building a model community will keep being fulfilled every year for the hundreds who come to be refreshed, regenerated and renewed. ■

Gwyneth Whilsmith is a contributing editor.

A Life at Crieff

MORE THAN 40 YEARS OF MEMORIES.

BY GLADYS ROBSON

As I drove up to the House of the Shepherd on Friday evening, I saw a lovely young deer scampering off towards the bush. I unloaded my car and realized I had enough luggage to last a week. I looked up on the ridge and there a large older deer appeared. He looked at me and then jumped the fence.

As my friends arrived, I told them my exciting news about the deer. Everyone settled in and we had our meditation. Then we played Mexican Train. Some of the ladies had gone directly to bed; I hope we didn't wake them up with our laughing and screaming.

The next day, I was on lunch duty, so I hurried back to the kitchen to prepare my celery and carrots. Two of the ladies had made pumpkin and vegetable soup. Delicious. Before the meal, we joined hands and sang *Johnny Appleseed*.

Before communion, I read an excerpt from *The Cup of Our Life* by Joyce Rupp. We all centred ourselves in readiness to share the bread and the cup. We prayed for everyone in our group and for the community at large. There was another walk back to the bush, the labyrinth and the chapel.

Every time I have gone to Crieff Hills, I have visited the cross to pray. I have stood beneath it and I have taken all my concerns and issues to God. I sit on the bench and think about my life and how I could be a better Christian.

We had our closing circle. We departed with warm thoughts and deep gratitude for the pleasure of enjoying each other's company. It had been a weekend of games and fun as well as another step in our spiritual journey.

How lucky we are that Col. Maclean bequeathed this land to us over 60 years ago. I want to thank the Presbyterian Church for providing this wonderful facility for us.

I have been going to Crieff for more than 40 years. It started with day camp (when I was pregnant), Canadian Girls in Training weekends, Sunday school outings and now a ladies group. It is wonderful to see the work of God in nature at Crieff. So much progress has been made. Everywhere you look you can see God's hand at work. And especially at the House of the Shepherd "where the deer and the antelope play." ■

Gladys Robson lives in Guelph, Ont.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Dependence on God

THE MISSION AND VISION OF THE RENEWAL FELLOWSHIP. **BY FRED STEWART**

If you are reading this column, I guess the Mayans, or those who would interpret their artifacts, got it wrong. The world did not end on Dec. 21, 2012. That leaves me with the same challenges I faced last year. Some of you may identify with me.

In our case, I believe that the Renewal Fellowship is at a major crossroads. Like many Presbyterian congregations, our members and other supporters are largely grey-haired and are either retired or soon to be. Almost every month we experience one of our donors reducing their support or even stopping completely. Unless we can cast a vision for younger Presbyterians, it is only a matter of time for our ministry to end. ➤

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Our mission is to bring Presbyterians together for prayer, learning, discussion and mutual support in groups small and large and to create environments where God's people can hear the call for renewal and respond together

Over the last year we have attempted to bring focus to the Fellowship so that we have a clear message and a strong understanding of what we are called to do and to be:

Our vision, passion and hope is to experience God's renewal of our lives, our congregations, our courts, our theological schools and every place where Presbyterians gather.

Our mission is to bring Presbyterians together for prayer, learning, discussion and mutual support in groups small and large and to create environments where God's people can hear the call for renewal and respond together.

Our plan is to pray, to support existing prayer gatherings and to encourage those not connected to a prayer group to find their own or help them to start a new one.

FOCUS: PRAYER

Our plan is to partner with others to create gatherings that provide learning, dialogue, networking and community.

FOCUS: COMMUNITY

Our plan is to encourage pastors and congregations by looking for tangible ways to support and encourage them.

FOCUS: ENCOURAGEMENT

Our plan is to dedicate everything we do to God, trusting that when like-minded individuals and congregations prayerfully seek and work for renewal, He will honour our vision, mission and plans and bring renewal.

FOCUS: DEPENDENCE ON GOD

We believe in the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church. We accept the church's polity and respect its courts.

We will work with everybody in our denomination with respect, compassion and shared faith.

In the past year I have had the privilege of visiting dozens of Presbyterian churches and breaking bread or having coffee with many dozens of our ministers across Canada. When I share this vision of encouragement and service, the response is immediate and positive. I have been blessed by the trust shown to me by ministers that have been willing to share deeply and confidentially about their hopes and dreams and their fears and loneliness. Almost every one of them has thanked me and the Fellowship for this form of ministry.

I love that I serve in a "big tent" denomination. Our theological spectrum is wide and our approaches to worship and ministry are diverse. The Fellowship exists to serve all Canadian Presbyterians while holding tight to the centrality and sufficiency of Jesus Christ and the wisdom and authority of God's word. ■

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship. To learn more see: renewalfellowship.presbyterian.ca.

THE WARM HEART

HOLY MOMENTS ACROSS MALAWI

PHOTOS AND STORY BY ANDREW FAIZ

The photograph is not easy to look at. But take a close look. There are two women. One is Jaclyn, her body wracked with HIV/AIDS, skeletal, staring at the camera. We are in her home, a six by six metre mud and brick structure with four small rooms. Despite her advanced shrunken stage she just fits in one of the rooms, which is now crammed with visitors.

The other woman is Maria, also HIV-positive, but she looks healthy. You wouldn't know she carries the virus unless you were told. She is a volunteer at Ekwendeni Hospital, near Mzuzu, Malawi. Since she was diagnosed, Maria has dedicated her life to helping women like Jaclyn. She visits them, encourages them, helps them as she can.

Jaclyn's home is several kilometres outside of town. In a couple of hardy sport utility vehicles it took our entourage close to an hour off-roading to get to this location. At the tail end of the dry season, the road was rough and dusty; bending, twisting, not so much a road as a compacted path. We couldn't have made the trip in a car; at least not without realigning the suspension and our spines.

To get to Jaclyn, and many others like her, is not an easy trip. To meet Jaclyn, and many others like her, is even more difficult.

Yet, Maria does it regularly, often on foot. It might take her several hours to get to Jaclyn's home, but she does it. When she gets here, she finds a person whose body is being eaten away by a sickness, who is depressed, worried about her children and family, perhaps feeling sorry for herself. All the emotions she deserves to have because she is a victim of a virus that has attacked her, and her family, and her nation.

Maria stays with Jaclyn, helping her with a simple meal of nsima, encouraging her to take her antiretroviral medicine and to eat; eat because the ARVs can make you loopy, so you have to take them with food.

Maria tells Jaclyn that if she eats regularly and takes the ARVs she too will be up and looking after her children very soon. This is a fantasy for Jaclyn; she can't imagine being able to do that again.

And somedays, nor can Maria, whose body crashes her determination now and then. HIV-positive but driven to stop the spread of the epidemic, she meets with pregnant women who are positive, teaching them how through the use of medication they can halt the spread of the virus to their newborns. She visits women like Jaclyn. And now and then, her body says, enough, we can't do this anymore. That's when she calls her supporters at the Ekwendeni Hospital, who have been known to rush her to an emergency room.

She falls apart, is surrounded by supporters and begins anew. This is her cycle. And in many ways the cycle of the country at large, which, like Maria, regularly breaks down and needs a large circle of support to survive. Last September, the country was limping with a downgraded currency, increasing inflation and wary donor nations holding back their support. There were rolling strikes and apocalyptic editorials in the media.

Jaclyn died in October. Her body was under attack and finally succumbed. Not quite into her mid-20s, she left behind two young children. She joined the hundreds of thousands of other Malawians to die the same way over the past decade, in their prime, too young, too soon. She left behind one child who is also HIV-positive. Jaclyn spent her short life within the era of the epidemic.

Malawi has long been one of the poorest countries in the world, with a gross annual income per capita of US$850 (compared to Canada's $39,830), with a high mortality rate for children under five, and a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. There are currently nearly a million people (of about 15 million) living with the virus; leaving three-quarters of a million child-orphans due to HIV/AIDS-related deaths alone.

Rev. Dr. John Vissers, moderator of the last General Assembly, referred to his visit with Jaclyn as a holy moment. Not as mature in my faith, I found it difficult to be there. I turned to Maria instead as my emotional anchor at the time. But Vissers's words have become a meditation for me. In that less than basic cottage, on that hot day, after that dusty ride, I know we were somehow on holy ground, in the presence of Christ. I don't understand this intellectually, my fail-safe position, but I do know the myriad statistics on poverty and mortality that I had researched were given two faces, one of harsh reality and one of pragmatism, both bridged and blessed by grace.

A GENERATION DECIMATED

For future reference, when visiting Malawi, make certain to travel with the moderator of the most recent General Assembly. You will be greeted everywhere you go with singing and dancing. African Christianity is visceral; a faith that moves through the body. From the moment Vissers (along with his wife Lynn and Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency) stepped off the plane, there was ➤

Clockwise from top left: Children at a child-headed household in Livingstonia Synod. Esther Lupafayo and Rick Fee at Ekwendeni Hospital. Crafts corner in Chifonde 1, a centre for orphans and vulnerable children in the Blantyre Synod. Mom and tots HIV/AIDS transmission prevention clinic, Ekwendeni. A class in the Apatsa School.

a line of singers to greet him, praising God and Christ for the arrival of honoured visitors. The scene was repeated several times, including at some humble villages.

Also, if you're able, make certain to take Rick Fee along on your African sojourn. On behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Fee lived in Nigeria for about two decades, and has led or been involved in many Malawi missions since the beginning of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the '80s. Speaking to a luncheon group in Blantyre, in southern Malawi, Fee remembered the heavy doom that hung over the country when the epidemic seemed unstoppable three decades ago. The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate and the number of people living with the virus doubled from the mid-80s to the mid-90s.

Fee and I went for a walk one evening through a cemetery on the grounds of the Blantyre Synod complex. From where we entered, it seemed at first a military burial ground from about a hundred years ago, with gravestones of British names, all male, all in their youth. These may have been from skirmishes related to the First World War or early independence movements. The next block of graves was a mixture of male and female, including some children, still British. These were likely the surviving military presence in what was then named Nyasaland.

From there, however, for a massive block of rows and columns, the story of a nation was written in stone and dirt, grave upon grave of people born in the '50s, '60s and '70s, dying in the '80s, '90s and '00s. Middle class, likely professionals given the evidence of their graves, a generation was decimated. Husbands and wives, in their 30s and 40s, buried alongside parents who died as senior citizens. If this is what happened to the comfortable and rich, one can only imagine what became of the poor.

Continuing at that lunch, Fee contrasted those memories with his observations of Malawi today. The doom has lifted, he said; there is a greater sense of hope. Missions supported by Presbyterian World Service and Development and by the PCC's International Ministries—from emergency food relief to long term support of medical and poverty initiatives—have made a difference over the years. The Presbyterian Church in Malawi (see sidebar) has been at the forefront of these programs, supporting hospitals, schools and many other integrated efforts.

Rich in spirit but lacking in lucre, the Malawi church can't maintain its commitments without outside help. I often felt I was witnessing an upside-down world, at least from my Canadian context, of what the Beatitudes would look like. A lot of faith, filled with dancing and singing, a lot of rejoicing for Christ, shame-free evangelism, and a great deal of missional work, honouring those sick and dying, those hungry and in pain,

STORY OF ESTHER

Esther Lupafayo witnessed her first snow in October. She was in New York City the week after Hurricane Sandy when a storm blew through.

"I was all white," she exclaims. "I had no hands and feet, I couldn't feel them."

The AIDS co-ordinator for the Ekwendeni Hospital, a mission of the Livingstonia Synod in Malawi, Lupafayo wanted to see Ground Zero, the site of the infamous terrorist attacks. The scale of the new monument, the building, in fact, the scale of the whole city was too much for her.

"It's so big," she says, crouching down and looking up as if the urban density was crushing her.

"I want people in Canada to know one thing about us in Malawi. We are a poor country. We are a poor people."

Lupafayo was in Canada on behalf of Presbyterian World Service and Development, where she is a committee member. She also spoke on behalf of the agency at some Ontario churches.

"Everywhere I go in this country, there is food. Food, food, food. When I go back to Malawi I will tell them, in Canada and in New York City, they are very rich. They have food everywhere.

"If you could take the building at Zero Ground, you could feed all of Malawi for one year or many years. I want people to understand this."

Lupafayo has grown into understanding that the HIV epidemic is only a symptom of issues that include poverty, education and culture. She shares in Rev. Dr. Rick Fee's memory of the dark days, and affirms his observation of the changes. The transmission of the virus from mother to child has decreased across Malawi, but is lower yet in Ekwendeni's catchment area.

The secret is in constant education and support programming. Stopping the transmission of the virus through pregnancy requires the care and support of husbands, which requires training for them to understand their responsibility as a caretaker, which requires rethinking gender and cultural roles.

"I remember," she says, "when people would not talk about AIDS. But today couples come to be tested before they marry. This is a big change in Malawi. Testing is very important."

Lupafayo is a mother and grandmother.—AF

There are many child-headed households–children raising children–125,000 children with HIV

filled with sacramental moments, but without the funds it takes to pay for the daily bread.

PRICE OF THE BEATITUDES

Mphatso Nguluwe is proof of Malawi's motto, "Warm Heart of Africa." A big smile always on her face, she exudes a passion for mission I witnessed many times across the country. She once told a group of international donors that if the only thing she had ever achieved was to save an eight-year-old girl from a forced marriage to a 52-year-old man, she would consider their millions of dollars well spent.

Nguluwe heads an HIV/AIDS project in the Livingstonia Synod. She raises an interesting question: What is the cost of the poor inheriting the earth? What is the cost (not value, I assume the answer to that is self-evident) of a sacramental moment? If all the millions spent by the PCC over the decades in Malawi, plus that spent by other donor churches, was only to free that little girl from that man, would it be worth it?

That girl, Ellen, was sold by her parents to be a third or later wife. She would have a low status in the household and would be made to do all the dirty work the other wives, each victims in their own way to local tradition and custom, did not want to do. But, once Ellen was rescued, she couldn't return to her family. That door was closed; there was shame attached to her being sold, and shame attached to her escaping that bondage. Plus, she wouldn't want to return.

So, she has to be housed someplace. Housed, fed, loved, educated.

The issue is never simple: Think on Jaclyn—poor and sick, each element making the other worse. Then after her death, what of her children? There are many child-headed households—children raising children—and 125,000 children with HIV.

On behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, John and Lynn Vissers, Rick Fee and I visited such a household. We also visited orphan care centres. And a clinic that tries to prevent HIV transmission from mother to child. And many other programs which are funded in part by our church in support of the two Malawi synods; and the message was clear: the root cause of the sickness, the deaths, even the national political and economic collapse, is poverty.

HIV could have ravaged Canada just as easily but it didn't, not because we are better people, but because we are wealthier. Our wealth allows us education and prevention. That message may not hit every individual, but it does spread across the nation. Poverty is the x-factor, the multiplier of all other issues.

One very powerful visit, for me, was to a remote village, which under the care and direction of Livingstonia's Ekwendeni Hospital has been experimenting with different crops. The staple meal in Malawi is nsima, made of maize, which was introduced by the Portuguese via their South American colonies. This provenance long forgotten, locals spend an enormous amount of energy raising, harvesting and preparing maize. It is a labour intensive process.

The seed program teaches villagers to break out of their maize dependence. We arrived at the village to singing and dancing; then around a table laden with food the farmers explained what plant they had taken on and how they farmed it. Soya, sweet potato, millet and cassava are hardy seeds; somewhat drought resistant, they require less water and can be harvested several times a year. After each farmer spoke of his work, a woman rose to tell us of a recipe she had used to cook that plant. (That is the genius of this program; not just seeds but recipes.)

Each person was excited to have learned this new thing and thrilled to show it off. Their energy was contagious. But the most powerful moment came at the end when an elder rose to say that in the past year, since the new seed program had started, the village had not lost one single child less than five years of age to malnutrition. The ubiquity of under-five mortality was halted with some seeds.

A FEW SEEDS

So, to the question, what is the monetary cost of the poor inheriting the earth? Well, it needn't be too much. A few seeds, a little imagination, a great deal of care.

And that care has seeded change in Malawi. The under-five mortality rate—the number per 1,000 live births who are likely to die within the first five years—has dropped from 222 to 92 over the past decade. The infant mortality rate (again, per 1,000) has dropped from 131 to 58. Most other indicators are also promising, including access to water and education.

But, there are still miles to go ➤

THE MALAWIAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Presbyterian Church in Malawi may have one name but it operates as three independent bodies.

The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Livingstonia Synod, in the northern district, is based in Mzuzu. The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Blantyre Synod, is in the south, based in Blantyre. Both trace their history and tradition to the Scottish Presbyterian Church, both have long-standing partnerships with the PCC. The third synod, in the central region, traces its connections to the Dutch Reformed from South Africa; it has no partnerships with the PCC. The three synods have very little relationship with each other; they are effectively three Presbyterian denominations under one name.

Livingstonia and Blantyre are very similar to each other; they both have active and devoted development departments, involved in poverty and HIV/AIDS programming. They both run hospitals and schools. They both have their own seminary. Congregations in both synods are growing and splitting into new congregations. It is not uncommon to have several thousand per congregation for Sunday worship, the earliest starting at 6 a.m., and several hundred coming to mid-week house church gatherings. Many of the larger congregations operate their own day schools, which are an important source of revenue. To counterbalance those numbers, givings per capita are low, as would be expected in such a poor country.

In Malawi a minister is essentially a pastor and part-time preacher. Worship is the responsibility of the laity, who take the pulpit on most Sundays. Ministers are also not involved in the administration of the church; again that is the responsibility of the laity. Ministers minister; they guide the laity and train them in taking on spiritual responsibilities. They are paid in part by the synod and in part by the congregation.

Ministers are free from all the other titles placed upon them in our context—no longer managers or administrators or board chairs. Lay people, many of them better trained in administration and structural leadership, volunteer their skills in specific ways.

Watching the involvement of the laity was exciting. But while this seemed most progressive, much of the Malawian church had a whiff of the colonial to it. The church is integrated into society at large, with an influence on local and national politics, and is seen as a source of authority on issues other than the spiritual and religious, and as an affirming source of status and identity. It is a glimpse into what the Canadian church may have looked like half a century to a century ago.

But even so, modernity is creeping into the Malawian church. While the church is still responsible for many aspects of primary and post-secondary education and health care, some of its funding is coming from government sources, who dictate standards of care and catchment areas.

A two-fold challenge to the Presbyterian Church, as identified by laity and clergy in both Livingstonia and Blantyre, is the prosperity gospel and vigorous Pentecostalism. Both are exported from Nigeria, which is a cultural juggernaut in Africa—a wealthy if troubled country with a powerful entertainment industry. But both have deeper roots in another powerful nation with ubiquitous media prowess: the United States.

One other sign of modernity in Malawi was hinted at by some and would be familiar to Canadians. It seems teens are less interested in church than previous generations. They would rather connect to the wider world via technology.—AF

Malawi needs international help to survive. Ninety per cent of its population lives in rural areas; its heavy reliance on agriculture leaves it vulnerable

yet. This was in many ways the message President Joyce Banda shared with us when we met her at the Blantyre airport the day of our departure. She was on the same flight out of the country to Johannesburg, on her way to the United Nations.

Banda has been named by *Forbes* magazine as the most powerful woman in Africa, but a year ago she was a politician in decline. Despite being elected as vice-president under Bingu wa Mutharika, she was attacked by the president and the political party for anti-party activities. The courts kept her from being removed from her position. After being expelled from the ruling party, she formed her own. She rose to the presidency after Mutharika's sudden death last April.

What she inherited was a mess. Under Mutharika's rule, financial aid had been suspended by all major Western donors. He had also strained relations with neighbouring countries. He was another in a line of arbitrary and erratic rulers, despite Malawi's democratic process. (Hastings Banda, unrelated to Joyce,

ruled for 28 years, declaring himself President for Life.) As one of the International Monetary Fund's 39 heavily indebted poor countries, Malawi needs international help to survive. Ninety per cent of its population lives in rural areas; its heavy reliance on agriculture leaves it vulnerable to the vagaries of the international marketplace.

Joyce Banda was the last Malawian I met before leaving but she reminded me of the spirit and the strength of the others, particularly the women, I had encountered the previous two weeks. Like Maria, overwhelmed but undaunted. I knew in talking to others that she is an active member of the Presbyterian Church; once holding a Bible study in her home. When she asked John Vissers to pray for her and her country, I was struck again by that feeling of witnessing a Beatitudinal reality. Another holy moment. ■

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *managing editor.*

There are lots of photographs and videos online. Be certain to watch Telephone to Jesus, taken at an orphan care centre by Lynn Vissers.

Top: A youth meeting after church at St. James, Blantyre. Bottom: Lynn Vissers gives praise the Malawi way in Timvane, an urban ghetto in the Blantyre Synod.

Clockwise from top left: Lynn and John Vissers receive gifts at Mpherembe, Livingstonia. Teens posing, Mpherembe. Mphatso Nguluwe in Livingstonia. Children in Timvane. Foods prepared from the Seeds and Soils program, Livingstonia. Opposite page: Mother and child, Mpherembe.

One Seamless Garment

CHRIST IS ALIVE IN AFRICA. **BY JOHN VISSERS**

On August 27, I left for a three-week trip to Africa accompanied by my wife Lynn and Rev. Dr. Rick Fee of the Life and Mission Agency. Andrew Faiz of the *Record* joined us a week later in Johannesburg.

We spent almost a week in Ghana followed by two weeks in Malawi; one week in the north in Livingstonia Synod, and a second week in Blantyre Synod in the south. It was my first visit to Africa and it was inspiring.

You can read about the work of our partner churches in Ghana and Malawi elsewhere in this issue of the *Record* and through the information available from International Ministries and Presbyterian World Service and Development. There are pictures, videos and stories of our trip on the Presbyterian Church and *Record* websites. I simply want to share a few reflections based on our experience, mostly in Malawi.

Our visit focused on four areas: visits with moderators, general secretaries and staff members at the synod and assembly offices of each church; visits to local congregations; exposure tours to relief, service and development projects; and meetings with students and faculty at theological colleges.

First, we were deeply impressed by the vibrancy of the church in Malawi as well as the beauty of the land and the richness of the culture. The church is alive and it is growing numerically and spiritually. It is an Acts 2:47 church where "the Lord is adding to their number daily those who are being saved."

The churches are full and they have lots of young people. The ministers are busy preaching, teaching, celebrating the sacraments, performing weddings, and doing funerals, while dedicated and able elders run the churches. In short, the church has many challenges, but it is flourishing.

We were deeply impressed by the vibrancy of the church in Malawi as well as the beauty of the land and the richness of the culture

There are many reasons for this. One is that there is a plausibility structure for the gospel in African society, unlike in the West. The message of the gospel resonates powerfully with people who experience the real issues of life and death on a daily basis. Christian faith is being tried and it works.

As a result, the centre of gravity for the Christian movement is shifting dramatically, from Europe and North America to the global south—Africa, Asia and South America. The "average" Christian today is a more likely to be a poor mother in Malawi or Latin America than a middle-class professional in Canada.

Secondly, we were deeply moved by the needs of the people in one of Africa's poorest peaceful countries. We were reminded that in Malawi the church has lots of people but fewer resources while in Canada we Presbyterians have fewer people and, comparatively, more resources.

I was gratified to see the ways our church is assisting the church in Malawi with such projects as safe water, food security, HIV/AIDS programs, education, communication and health care. As a small Canadian church we are punching above our weight through our partnership in Malawi and I was proud to represent us.

That said, I wasn't in Malawi very long before I started questioning why things are the way they are. Don't get me wrong. I'm grateful for most of what I experience through life in the Modern West, but the way we consume resources while others go without raises disturbing questions of justice. It also highlights the way materialism seems to bankrupt our souls in the West.

Thirdly, I was excited by the Christ-centred holistic approach to the gospel that we saw everywhere we went. The church is engaged in evangelism, church planting, spiritual renewal, social justice and relief and development. This is a church that preaches the hope of Christ crucified, risen and ascended, and is deeply involved in the muck and mire of daily life.

There is no dichotomy here; it is

PORTRAIT BY WESLEY BATES/THREEINABOX.COM

all part of the one seamless garment of the gospel. People are coming to personal faith in Jesus Christ at the same time that people are being fed, housed and cared for. Again, it reminds one of the emerging church in Acts 2.

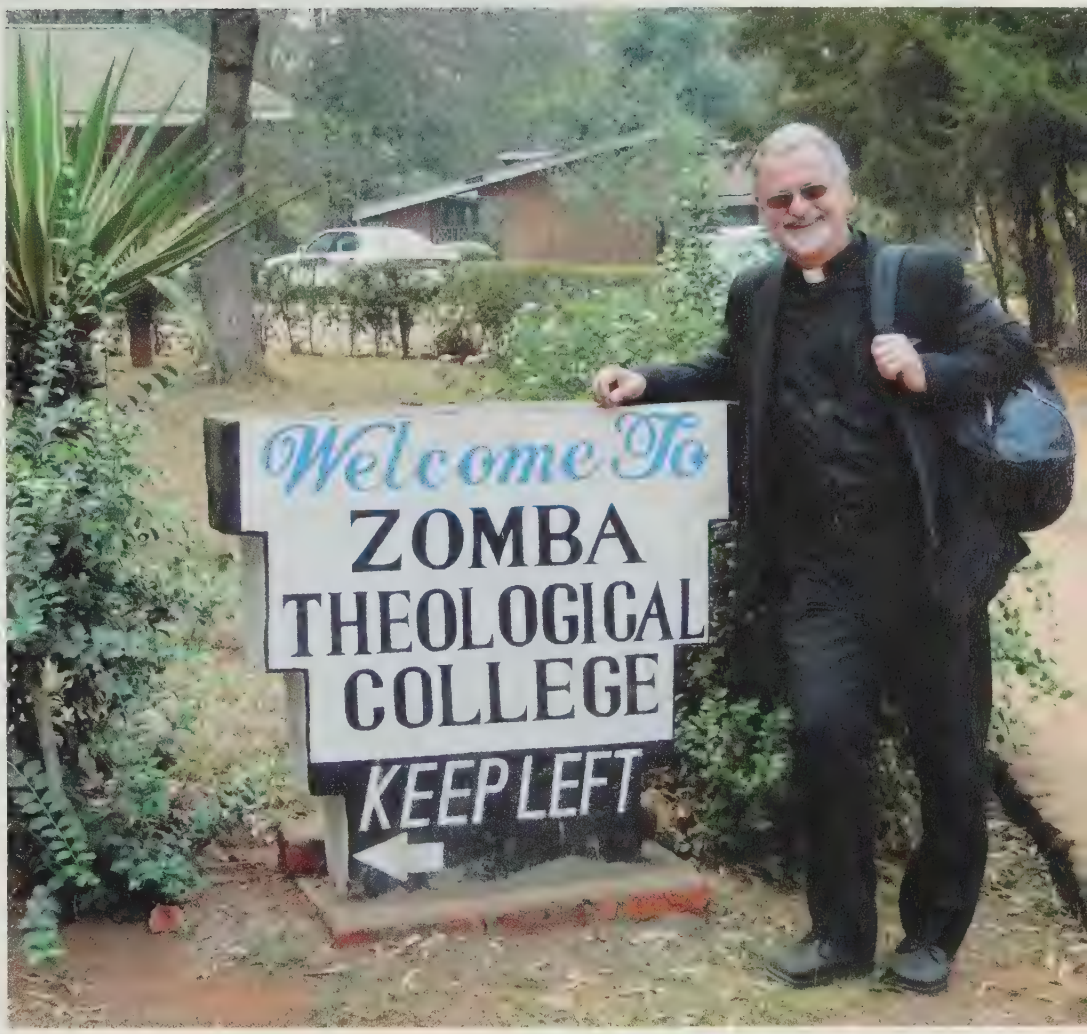
Finally, I was deeply humbled by the generosity, gratitude and grace with which we were greeted everywhere we went. As moderator, I was the recipient of honour and appreciation that rightly belongs to the whole Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Everywhere we went we were met with smiling faces filled with joy and hope, with music and singing led by the young people and the women's guilds, by children eager to meet us and interact with us. I made more speeches and shook more hands than I likely ever will again. We received gifts that represented sacrificial giving on the part of those giving them. We experienced "the warm heart of Africa."

Let me conclude by saying that our time in Malawi was framed in prayer. Near the beginning of our visit to Livingstonia we had the privilege of visiting a young mother near Ekwendeni Hospital living with AIDS. Jaclyn was not having a good day when we were there and at one point I was asked to pray with her. When I asked her what I should pray for she said, "Peace, pray that I will have peace." It was a holy moment. Jaclyn died four weeks after our visit.

The day we left Malawi we had the privilege of meeting the President, Her Excellency Joyce Banda. We were expecting a very brief meet-and-greet but we had a sit-down conversation during which she shared her story of becoming president and her hopes for the future of Malawi. Both she and the vice-president are believers and members of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian. President Banda is the first woman to hold this office in Malawi and only the second in Africa.

She asked me to pray for her government and for the country and I was pleased to do so. It was the last thing I did before we boarded the plane for home. I invite all of us as a church to continue to remember Malawi in our prayers. They are our sisters and brothers. ■



Top: Visiting Zomba Theological College in Blantyre Synod; Right: Preaching at St. James CCAP, Blantyre.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW FAIZ

Rev. Dr. John Vissers is director of academic programs and professor of historical theology at Knox College, Toronto. jvissers@presbyterian.ca

People & Places

To make People & Places submissions, email: **peopleplaces@presbyterianrecord.ca**

Bonnie View Inn, Haliburton, Ont.

An ecumenical group of church secretaries gathered together for a three day conference in October. Skill building sessions, delicious meals, zumba dancing, worship and musical performances ensured the administrators developed both their gifts and their friendships. See pcsa.ca for more photos.

First, Pictou, N.S.

Young church members play pirates in Grant Park, P.E.I. The congregation held a corn boil picnic there to kick off the Sunday school season and welcome the community back to fall activities.

Trafalgar, Oakville, Ont.

After Sunday school students spent a month learning about our church's history of mission in India, they hosted a themed performance for the congregation. Bollywood dancing, live music and a martial arts demonstration helped raise over $500 for PWS&D.

Paterson Memorial, Sarnia, Ont.
Following his first worship service as their new pastor, Rev. Allan Farris cuts Thanksgiving cake for the congregation. Session member Dorothy Moss (left) lends a hand.

Knox, St. Thomas, Ont.
Becky Noxell and sons Alex and Owen dig into their pumpkins at the Second Annual Pumpkin Carving Night. Participants attempted to carve 175 pumpkins for the congregation's 175th anniversary. They came close—131 were carved.

St. Andrew's, Wingham, Ont.
The moderator, Rev. Dr. John Vissers (centre), was the guest speaker at a worship service celebrating the congregation's 150th anniversary. As he prepares to cut the anniversary cake he is joined by Lorraine Clugston, chair of the 150th anniversary committee, Hugh Clugston, session clerk, Rev. Bernie Skelding and Jennifer Skelding.

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Ministry Opportunities

SYNOD OF THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Merigomish, St. Paul's and Westville, St. Andrew's; Two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Iona MacLean, 17 Prince St., PO Box 1840, Pictou, NS B0K 1H0; 902-485-4298; ionamac@eastlink.ca.

SYNOD OF QUEBEC AND EASTERN ONTARIO

Montreal, Cote des Neiges; Full-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Dan Shute, Presbyterian College, 3495 University St., Montreal, QC H3A 1A8; dshute@presbyteriancollege.ca.

Montreal, The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul; Associate minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Dale Woods, 3495 University St., Montreal, QC H3A 2A8; 514-288-5256 extension 202; pastoralstudies@presbyteriancollege.ca.

Richmond, Ont., St. Andrew's; Full-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Kelly Graham, 5533 Dickinson St., Manotick, ON K4M 1A6; 613-692-4228; revkgraham@gmail.com.

Winchester, Ont., St. Paul's; Chesterville, St. Andrew's; Morewood; Full-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Jim Ferrier, PO Box 131, Maxville, ON K0C 1T0; 613-538-2582; jim_olga@sympatico.ca.

SYNOD OF CENTRAL, NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO AND BERMUDA

Ajax, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Lois Whitwell, 445 Beverly St., Oshawa, ON L1G 1P9; 905-579-8255; loiswhitwell@rogers.com

Kingston, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Karen Bach; 613-929-3693; karen.bach@utoronto.ca.

Kitchener, Calvin; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator The Rev. J. Mark Lewis, 54 Queen St. N., Kitchener, ON N2H 2H2; 519-578-4430; revmarklewis@gmail.com.

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Water Beneath the Stones

UNCOVERING THE FAITH OF OUR ANCESTORS. **BY CONNIE WARDLE**

From July 6 to 22, 2012, Connie Wardle participated in a pilgrimage through countries touched by the Protestant Reformation—France, Switzerland and Scotland. This is the first of a series of reflections on the journey.

It was an intimidating place to begin a pilgrimage. Standing beneath the arches of Saint-Étienne Cathedral in Meaux, France, I felt like I was lost in some great, petrified forest. It was a landscape of wrought iron and smooth white stone, populated by immobile saints and pocketed with side chapels.

Rev. Dr. Gerald Hobbs, a United Church minister and one of our guides, gathered the three-dozen pilgrims into an alcove. And he told us a story about stones and water.

In the days of Genesis 26, Isaac returned to a valley where he knew his father Abraham had once lived. Abraham had found water and dug wells there; when Isaac returned, he found the wells were full of rubble. Yet he believed there was still water beneath the ruins, so he and his servants began clearing them away.

A pilgrimage is a quest to return to the places where the ancestors of our faith found living water, Hobbs said. There may be metaphorical ruins we need to clear away.

Later that morning we walked past the ruins of the old city walls to the Catholic diocesan library. The site was once a mission, then a seminary. Now the old sanctuary is full of books. The words of many writers—including John Calvin in an edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*—are nestled together in a place of knowledge and worship. A communion table still stands near one of the walls, and it is still used for mass.

Before Martin Luther beat his 95 Theses into the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg—an act that is usually credited with starting the Protestant Reformation—a priest named Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples was already convinced the church needed reforming. He believed the scriptures should be the basis for church doctrine, he wrote about justification through faith—an idea that became a hallmark of the Reformation as it was championed by Luther—and he translated the Bible into French. He believed all literate Christians should be able to access the scriptures, not only the learned elite. His stance didn't make him popular, especially among the theologians of the Sorbonne, Paris's most distinguished ecclesiastical institution.

Church authorities worried the average layperson would not understand what they were reading in the Bible and would misinterpret the text. But Lefèvre and other members of the Meaux group, including Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet, were not afraid of giving up the power that came from interpreting the scriptures for others.

"God's word shares itself at times more entirely and spiritually with the simple, the humble and the lowly, than with the clergy who are less humble and more puffed up," Lefèvre wrote.

Today, a table in the Meaux cathedral is laden with free copies of the New Testament—a quiet reminder of the legacy of the Meaux group. ■

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s senior staff writer.*

PHOTO: CONNIE WARDLE

continued from page 50

In addition to the word, I have the Spirit of God. If the word of God holds God before my eyes, the Spirit of God renders my heart open to what God has for me to encounter as I ponder God's mystery

ice? I asked my neighbour Randy what he thought and he said that an otter found a crack or a weak spot in the ice and literally clawed his way through, carving the ice with his sharp claws. Have you ever tried to cut a hole in a metre of January ice at 30 below zero? I have, with an axe, and it's an all-afternoon job with little reward except the single malt on crushed ice that waits by the fire at the end of the day.

An interesting article about river otters on lifeinthefingerlakes.com tells this story: "That first winter the otters were active throughout the canal. They would make seven or eight inch wide air holes in the ice, pop through them, and consume their catch on the surface. One morning while cross-country skiing, I heard a 'thumping' sound coming from the canal, now covered by nearly an inch of ice. Two or three 'thuds' later, an otter, which evidently had been banging its head to make a hole, broke through the ice. It vigorously shook its head as if to say, 'Man, that hurt!'"

I have never seen anything like that. Besides, an inch of new ice is a tad different than the metre of blue steel that covers our lake in January. So how does a river otter carve a hole through the Lac La Hache ice in January? It remains a total mystery for me to ponder.

I expect some fellow nimrod will come along one day and enlighten me as to otter holes, but here is my point. I love to ponder mysteries. But the mysteries I ponder tend to be the ones right in my face, like the winter otter holes outside my picture window on Lac La Hache. The mysteries I am attracted to are the ones I can see, like the northern lights that blaze deep

green and red above my head on a midnight winter walk that I take as antidote for insomnia. I am not all that intrigued by the unseen mysteries.

So I have a confession. Though I have a deepening faith in God whom I can't see, I seldom really ponder the mystery of God. In myself, I seem not too inclined to spend much time pondering the mystery of an unseen God. It's an issue of being out of sight and out of mind. And that's why I so deeply need the word of God.

I used to think the purpose of the word of God was pretty much limited to explaining the mysteries of God to me. I seem to be coming to a new appreciation of the word of God, written and proclaimed. I am becoming increasingly aware that the word of God functions not just to explain God to me, to demystify God so to speak, but to reveal God to me, to bring God before my eyes so that I am compelled to ponder the mystery that is God. Whatever else the purpose of the word of God is, it seems to me that it is to place God in my picture window, not so that I can necessarily understand God completely, but so that in having God before my eyes I am enticed to ponder how deep and wide and broad are the mysteries. In addition to the word, I have the Spirit of God. If the word of God holds God before my eyes, the Spirit of God renders my heart open to what God has for me to encounter as I ponder God's mystery. And I am left blessed, like the psalmist who says after pondering the mystery of God, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it" (Psalm 139:6).

This brings an entirely new and rich approach to my reading of, listening to and proclaiming the word of God. It yanks me back from the precipice of trying to turn the whole of the Bible into a God manual, mere didache. It most particularly makes me much more open to the eschatological and apocalyptic parts of the Bible, which were an anathema to the likes of Albert Schweitzer and Rudolf Bultmann; they became fixated upon demystifying and demythologizing both scripture and God. Both of these fellas have had a huge effect on modern biblical translation, theology and preaching. I for one find I am deeply appreciative of an otter revelation. ■

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of several books.

An Otter Revelation

PONDERING THE MYSTERIES. **BY DAVID WEBBER**

ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY FALLS

There are some locals here at Lac La Hache, B.C., who have a winter sport that I call ice surfing. Apparently it is a very competitive sport, partly shrouded in mystery, at least for me. These locals, dressed in rich brown fur with stout round tails, come up from below the winter ice to pursue their sport. About the end of January they prepare several beautiful round holes about five or six inches in diameter at several places in the lake ice. The contestants show up in teams, racing and belly-surfing on the ice between the holes. The object of the game seems to be to emerge though one hole, hit the ice at a dead run, then slide on your belly for as far as you can to finally slither down another hole like a raw oyster disappearing down an inebriated gullet at a big city New Year's Eve party. It is very entertaining to watch, though I confess I haven't quite got all the rules figured out. I watch the sport like I watch curling on TV, puzzled by the rules but strangely captured by the on-ice antics.

But it's not just the rules of the game that have me befuddled. How on earth do they prepare the ice sheet? How does a northern river otter carve a five or six inch hole through a metre of winter *continued on page 49*

O for a thousand tongues to sing
My dear Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!

CHARLES WESLEY
BOOK OF PRAISE, 247

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICK FEE

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"I wasn't in Malawi very long before I started questioning why things are the way they are. Don't get me wrong. I'm grateful for most of what I experience through life in the Modern West, but the way we consume resources while others go without raises disturbing questions of justice. It also highlights the way materialism seems to bankrupt our souls in the West."

—REV. DR. JOHN VISSERS IN THE JANUARY ISSUE

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On the Cover: Photo illustration by Martin O'Neill

TOP IMAGE: LAURENCE DEWOLFE. BOTTOM LEFT: BARRY FALLS. BOTTOM RIGHT: ISTOCK PHOTO

Are We Nuts?

WE'RE NOT AS CHARITABLE A NATION AS WE THINK. **BY DAVID HARRIS**

No, Mr. Cherry, you are not right.

It was just a little over three years ago that Haiti was devastated by a magnitude 7 earthquake. Between one and 1.5 million Haitians were left homeless, 100,000 or more were killed. The capital, Port-au-Prince, was flattened.

As the CIA World Factbook puts it: "Already the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere with 80 per cent of the population living under the poverty line and 54 per cent in abject poverty, the earthquake inflicted $7.8 billion in damage ... Haiti received $4.59 billion in international pledges for reconstruction, which has proceeded slowly."

The federal government pledged $550 million, some of it based on matching private donations from Canadians, which quickly reached $220 million.

Yet a year ago, barely half of the pledged international aid money had been disbursed. The United States and Venezuela, who promised the most, have delivered the least relatively speaking.

Last year, Canada sent another $49.5 million to Haiti. It is the largest recipient country of Canada's pathetic foreign aid. We spend around $5 billion in aid—not even half what we pledged in the 1970s when the rich nations of the world promised to spend 0.7 per cent of their gross national income on aid.

And it's a little more than one-fifth of what we spend on our military.

But that $50 million to Haiti is $50 million too much according to Don Cherry. Mr. Cherry recently sent a series of tweets to his 118,000 followers that were quickly picked up by the media.

"You know, I am one of those guys, like most people in Canada, we like to help the countries all over the world. But sometimes it makes you wonder," he wrote. "Maybe it's just me. But Canada gave Haiti $49.5 million dollars last year. Are we nuts?"

We spend around $5 billion in aid—not even half what we promised in the 1970s

At this point, it is temping to reflect the question back, but there's more.

"We've got a guy dying in Toronto waiting 3 hours for an ambulance," he tweeted, referring to an elderly nursing home patient with a do-not-resuscitate order whose situation was called in as low priority by the nursing home but who died while ambulances were busy with higher priority calls.

"We got people waiting 7, 8, 10 hours, if they're lucky, in a waiting room with one doctor for a zillion people."

Not quite, Don. There are about 20 physicians for 10,000 people in Canada. That's low for a developed country, although not far off other places. But if you want a lot of doctors, communist Cuba has the highest ratio at 67 physicians per 10,000.

"We nickel and dime our doctors, nurses and veterans plus a million other services. Yet we can send almost 50 million to Haiti."

Nickel and dime doctors? Really? Family physicians made about $125,000 after expenses in 2011, according to the journal *Health Affairs*. For registered nurses providing patient bedside care, the range is about $58,000 to $74,000 according to Registered Nurse Canada.

"I'll tell ya something," he continued, "the working guy is getting kind of sick of people spending money like that ... Lets smarten up. As the old saying goes, charity begins at home. Am I right or is it just me?"

Well, no, you're wrong, Don. Although sadly it's not just you. (And at $800,000 a year, his CBC contract lets him speak for 20 average working guys his age.)

The *Toronto Sun*'s Peter Worthington quickly came to Don's defense. The problem is that Haitians are lacking "self-reliance." And are burdened with "corrupt and incompetent politicians." Because Canada has none of those ....

"It is up to Haitians to save themselves and end the decades of being a beggar nation," wrote Worthington.

A little perspective on that. In 1825, France forced Haiti to pay a ransom of 90 million gold francs—about $20 billion dollars—as compensation for the loss of slaves and property in the wake of independence in 1804. The interest rates were so crippling that the debt wasn't paid off until 1947.

Back to Don. Charity—grace and love, that is—does begin at home. As a nation, we need to reflect on that, because it's clear we aren't quite as charitable as we'd like to think. ■

David Harris is the editor and publisher of the Record. *dharris@presbyterian.ca*

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Letters

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What Has God Done?

When we write or talk about "what to do" regarding the State of Israel and the Palestinians it's easy to end up reflecting someone else's godless ideology or be seen as merely taking a side. I am now realizing that much of my preaching over the years was of the "What Would Jesus Do?" sort. This is important enough, but not at the expense of "What Has God Done?"

Firstly, out of all the tribes that used to live in the land (Moabites, Ammonites, Hivites, etc.) just one is left. The Israelites. Why are the Jews still with us? As a not so silent witness to the world that the Israelite God is God and that He was and is always faithful to keep His word.

Secondly, to understand God's word is to understand that right from the call of Israel's ancestor, Abram, it's never really been about the land or an ethnicity. It's been about a having a loving relationship with God and a place within His eternal presence.

I have been invited through Christ to tell again what God has done, is doing and will do in the future for all those who have the faith of Abraham and so become God's children.

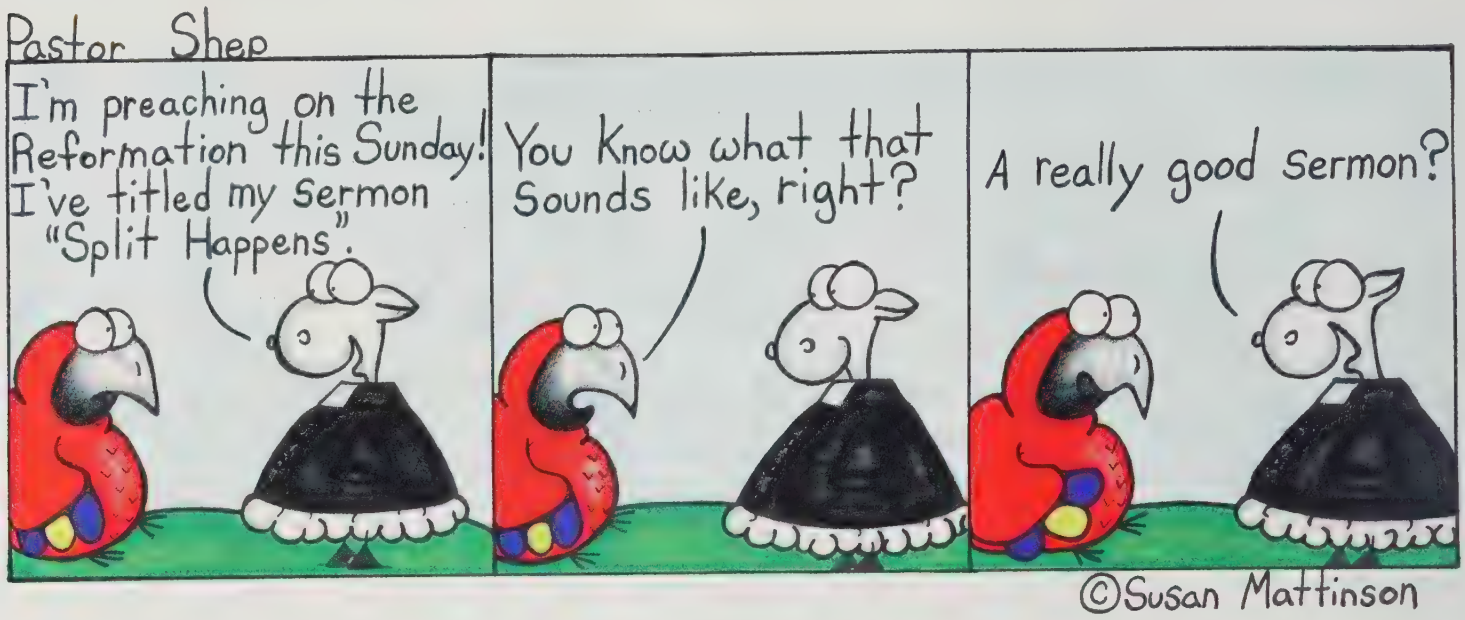
JAMES STATHAM, PEACHLAND, B.C.

Give Thanks

Re Christian Magazine Reveals 'Disturbing' Letter from CRA, December

Please read Philippians 4:12—we should give thanks, not criticism. There are numerous good causes and charities, but we all have choices and limited funds. Notwithstanding the excellence of these requests for funding, I like Canada's approach of moderation, not that of Greece where they now must slash expenditures to survive.

GERALD MORGAN, VIA EMAIL ➤



Nostalgia is Not Enough

Re Want Young People in Your Church?, November

Please accept my compliments on the superb issue on the Presbyterian Young People's Society. For anyone who went through equivalent Christian organizations, it brought back memories.

Mine began at a YMCA camp near Orillia, Ont. Established by the legendary Stu Watson, aka "Mr. Y," it was run on a shoestring budget, which enabled my parents to send my brother and me for two weeks for only $100. It was the best investment they ever made.

The camp was run by teenagers under the minimal guidance of Stu. They took us down railway lines, through the woods, down rivers and lakes, taught us how to make and break camp and not least of all, opened us to the power of ghost stories and legends to haunt our imaginations.

While I was attending university, the Christian community was active, high-spirited and dedicated to having a good time in the name of the Lord. It was a blast—full of humorous, good-natured and wonderfully turned out young men and women on the threshold of life. I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Unfortunately, by the time I began my studies for the ministry, the demographics had changed and very few teenagers were willing to get involved. In my first charge, the youth group disbanded. Plus the attitude of the church was changing.

No longer were young people appreciated. They were noisy, spilling and damaging stuff and weren't considered reliable. It was easier to go with the flow rather than fight a losing battle to have them around.

This was brought home when in one congregation the Sunday school wanted to hold a picnic on a Sunday. They were turned down by the session for "violating the Sabbath." When I protested, I was shot down in flames.

Much later I successfully convinced a presbytery to subsidize a dozen youth from our congregation to go to the big summer Presbyterian youth gathering in the United States. The only condition was that they report back. None of them did, which left a sour taste.

In my last congregation, the Sunday school died when the young people grew up and moved on to other activities—and no one really noticed; life was happy the way things were. So while

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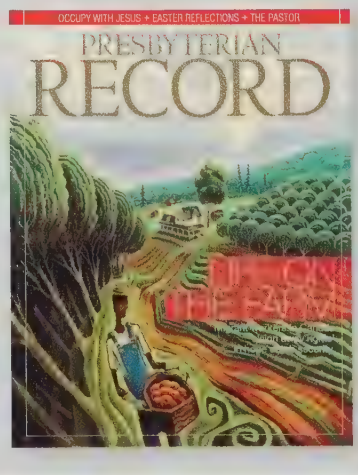

the *Record* article was nostalgic, it was a reminder that we who were young are young no more and we have nothing but our memories to console us.

In response, I have undertaken youth ministry outside the walls of the church. I'm an apprentice minor hockey and soccer referee and a liftee at the ski hill, places where there are young people and young families. I have no idea what influence I'm having but that's not the point. I look back and deeply appreciate all the things the church and older people did for me to mould the person I became.

REV. ROD LAMB, KEEWATIN, ONT.

Sparked Deep Thinking

Re All Dogs Are Welcome Here, July/August 2011

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe sparked deep thinking and conversation with Dr. Pauline Brown (daughter of Canada). It caused us to look at new ways of reacting to Jesus's teaching. I have used the article in preparing devotions for chapel in the hospital and ladies' groups. I enjoyed this article so very much that I have to write to you to express appreciation. Many of us at Jobat Christian Hospital enjoy the *Record* with its fine articles and look forward to its regular arrival.

DR. DEBORAH TIZLO, JOBAT, INDIA

Knowledge and Sin

Re Sinful Infants, December Letters

I don't think relevancy has anything to do with why Christians don't give much credence to the argument that infants are "born sinners." They search for answers in the Bible, and from much context (especially in Genesis) it can be determined that sin is a direct and inevitable result of knowledge. Neither Adam nor Eve sinned until they ate from the tree, which God forbade them to eat from. Apply this how you will, but until infants are fully intellectually capable, they are incapable of sin.

JEFF SINCLAIR, MISSISSAUGA, ONT.

A Simpler Formula

Re Council Budgets for 2014, January

As the former stewardship convenor for the Presbytery of Pickering, I heartily applaud the decision of the Assembly Council to consider asking churches to allocate 10 per cent of their revenue to Presbyterians Sharing. The former allocation requests were largely beyond the ability of most congregations to pay, so I as a stewardship convenor, along with the presbytery committee, devised a more "manageable" arrangement for our churches. With this new change such tinkering with the requests of church offices should be a thing of the past.

RALPH FLUIT, VIA EMAIL

Creative Changes

Re Constructive Anxiety, January

I'm a relative newcomer to the Presbyterian Church; I'm changing denominations and traditions after more than 30 years of ordained ministry in an evangelical church. Yes, there is a lot of change and anxiety and some numerical decline in our national church. But I feel great optimism and hope for our future. There are lots of signs of life and health and renewal in our denomination. We may look very different a decade or two from now. But God is always renewing and reforming. If we are open to some of the suggested changes in the editorial and open to new ways of relating to our changing society, we will continue to make an important contribution and be an influence for God and for good. New directions, creative changes, innovative discussion and thinking. Bring them on.

ROBERT QUICK, LINDSAY, ONT. ■

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Challenging Questions

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SEEKS OUT SOME TOUGH ANSWERS. **BY JOHN-PETER SMIT**

Many years ago, someone told me, "If you don't want to hear the answer, don't ask the question." I have tried hard to follow this advice. Still, there have been times when I have had to ask the question whether I wanted to hear the answer or not.

So, I would like to acknowledge two important instances where the Presbyterian Church has had the courage to ask the question, even if it is challenged by the answer.

The first seeks response to an insightful report written by Rev. Gordon Haynes, former associate secretary of Canada Ministries, which was commissioned by Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency. Haynes's insights have recently been distributed to the wider church for input. He paints a challenging picture of the church—a drop in baptisms of 70 per cent over 17 years, a drop in worship attendance of three per cent annually since 2005 and a membership that is half of what it was in 1964. Still, there is a willingness to confront the sheer magnitude of the statistics; a necessary step if we are to address these issues in a constructive manner.

What is impressive about this report is threefold. First is its comprehensive nature. Second, it provides recommendations; recommendations that are not simply rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, but which address pervasive issues in our structure and polity. Third, and perhaps most impressive of all was Fee's courage in distributing the report for consideration and action.

The second question being asked by the church comes from a finance committee. It invites Presbyterians to provide input into priorities and passions to be reflected in our 2014 General Assembly budget. This budget will be challenging for the church and the Assembly Council has created a special committee to help craft a budget which reflects the priorities of the whole church. Yes, this comes at a time when finances are shrinking but it encourages the church to be strategic in setting direction for future ministry.

All these questions come in the context of our last General Assembly, by many accounts one of the most hopeful in years and one which put the spotlight clearly and firmly on the need for congregational vitality as the very foundation of our denomination's work and witness

"If you don't want to hear the answer, don't ask the question." Clearly the Assembly Council and the Life and Mission Agency are willing to hear answers, even difficult ones, if they accurately reflect the ministry priorities of the church.

It is easy to be cynical about both these reports; financial challenges and endless reports are not new. It is easy to assume that nothing will change. However, I am hopeful for a number of reasons. Firstly, because the questions are coming from the Assembly Council and the Life and Mission Agency and the general secretary at about the same time. Secondly, we are not being asked to discuss theories or vague hopes, but concrete proposals for the ministry of our church. Finally, all these questions come in the context of our last General Assembly, by many accounts one of the most hopeful in years and one which put the spotlight clearly and firmly on the need for congregational vitality as the very foundation of our denomination's work and witness.

Many of you reading this will be unfamiliar with both these documents but I would urge you to read them. The budget request is available on presbyterian.ca and Haynes's report is available through the clerk of each presbytery. There is some urgency to the budget letter as input must be received by February 15th. It is my hope that we would honour the courage of those who have asked these questions by providing answers, even challenging ones, and that further, we would uphold in prayer those who will consider the responses, asking they be granted the best wisdom and insight to know what is best for our church in these challenging times. ■

Rev. Dr. John-Peter Smit is congregational development consultant for the Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda.

Gary Shields, caretaker, stands in the rebuilt sanctuary of East Lake Ainslie. He holds a cross made from nails recovered from the ruins of the previous church, which burned down in December, 2011.

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE WADDEN/CAPE BRETON POST

Risen from the Ashes

CONGREGATION OF EAST LAKE AINSLIE, N.S., REBUILDS CHURCH DESTROYED BY FIRE.

BY CONNIE WARDLE

ON DEC. 18, 2011, only days before Christmas, the Presbyterian church in East Lake Ainslie, N.S., burned to the ground.

One year later, the congregation celebrated Christmas Eve with a service in its new building, which sits in the footprint of its 131-year-old predecessor. The new church looks much like the previous one and seats 140. There was standing room only at the Christmas Eve service.

The congregation plans to hold a formal dedication service in July.

"Presbytery cautioned us strongly [about rebuilding]," said Rev. Louis Ihasz, the retired United Church minister who serves the two-point charge of East Lake Ainslie and Farquharson, Middle River. "They said this may not be a good time to rebuild because churches are closing. But sometimes the worst of times is the best of times to show your faith in the church.

"These people were determined, and they're the salt of the earth."

In the months that followed the fire, volunteers helped clear away the scorched ruins of the old building. They gathered up square nails, which one member welded together into crosses. A former member, who now lives in Halifax, made wooden bases so the crosses could be sold to raise funds.

The congregation set up a building committee and a fundraising committee. Support flooded in from churches in Cape Breton and across the country.

Rev. Ian MacMillan, who now serves at St. Andrew's, Lancaster, and St. Andrew's, Martintown, Ont., grew up in East Lake Ainslie and was ordained in the old church. At his request, the session of his Lancaster church sent ➤

the offering from their 2011 Christmas Eve service to the Cape Breton congregation. Members of the Martintown church also pitched in with special donations. Together the congregations contributed about $4,000.

Roman Catholic churches in West Lake Ainslie and East Margaree also raised support. And donations from former members and families rolled in over the summer in response to letters sent out by the fundraising committee.

"We gave them the opportunity to buy a pew and we'd dedicate it in memory of someone," Ihasz said. "We had 20 pews to sell, and 27 families willing to buy pews. So we divided some pews up with one family name on one end and another family on the other end."

Donations from former members and families rolled in over the summer in response to letters sent out by the fundraising committee

A church that was closing donated the pulpit, communion table and chairs; another sold the congregation its pews.

Although the treasurer, Clifford Collins, had not completed his year-end calculations at press time and a few bills from the contractor were yet to arrive, he estimated the total cost of rebuilding was about $400,000. With $350,000 received from an insurance payout and between $50,000 and $75,000 from donations and fundraising, "we're going to be basically debt free," he said.

"They seem to have a renewed energy in their faith," MacMillan said of his old congregation. "It's incredible. It's not a big church; it's one of these little rural churches. But the people who go there are very committed."

A congregation has been worshipping in East Lake Ainslie since 1833. This is its fourth building.

"I tell people our church didn't burn down," Ihasz said. "Our building burned down. The church is the people." ■

Community News

PCC Responds to Idle No More

THE CHURCH has issued a public statement in response to the Idle No More movement and Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence's call to meet with the Governor General and prime minister.

"These events offer us an opportunity to reflect on the Presbyterian Church in Canada's commitment to establish right relations with Aboriginal people," reads the statement, published two days before the prime minister met with chiefs on Jan. 11.

One month earlier, Chief Spence began a hunger strike, protesting the failure of the government to honour its treaty relationships with First Nations. She called for a meeting with the prime minister and Governor General.

Her act of protest became a catalyst for the Idle No More movement, which galvanized around fighting Bill C-45. Many believe the bill could endanger Canada's ecological well-being.

"There is an urgent need to hear and respond to the concerns raised by Aboriginal people regarding changes to federal legislation that they believe will have an impact on them," the church's statement says.

It suggests members view Idle No More and Chief Spence's hunger strike through the lens of the church's 1994 Confession to Aboriginal peoples: "With God's guidance, our church will seek opportunities to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness together as God's people."

The church asks members to pray for government and First Nations leaders, seek opportunities to talk with First Nations peoples about their concerns and take time to visit the Idle No More website.

In a letter published the same day, the moderator of the 138th General Assembly, Rev. Dr. John Vissers, urged the prime minister to see his Jan. 11 meeting with First Nations leaders as an opportunity to "build on the apology you offered on behalf of all Canadians in the House of Commons on June 11, 2008."

"This is a moment for bold initiatives to resolve long-standing issues such as treaty rights, land claims and the deep levels of poverty among so many Aboriginal people," he wrote. ■

—Seth Veenstra

Church Hosts Day Camp During Teacher's Strike

WHEN THOUSANDS OF teachers were preparing for a one-day strike on Dec. 18, parents throughout Ontario were scrambling to find child care. Rev. Derek Macleod was already anticipating the strain a stike would put on parents in his neighbourhood.

Rev. Dr. John Vissers (second from left) participates in a circle of reconciliation at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's event in Saskatoon, June 2012.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SETH VEENSTRA

"I'm a parent of three kids—all in elementary school. I knew there'd be other parents like me who would want a safe, healthy place for their children to be if there was a strike," said Macleod, senior minister at Glenview, Toronto.

He came up with the idea of "Strike Camp," a day long program for schoolchildren.

"We see it as a way to respond to a need in our community," said Macleod. "It's part of taking our kids' needs seriously."

Facilitated by church staff and volunteers, Strike Camp provided 20 children with a day packed with activities including baking, arts and crafts, a movie and hide-and-seek in the church. Macleod said they were prepared to accommodate 50 grade school students.

"A ministry of hospitality is so important." He said he sees Strike Camp in the same light as the weekly Out of the Cold program for the homeless. "It all comes from the same motivation." ■ —*SV*

Beloved Professor and Writer Passes Away

THE CELEBRATED EDUCATOR, author, and pastor, Rev. Dr. Sheldon MacKenzie passed away Dec. 27, in Chilliwack, B.C., at the age of 82.

Ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1958, MacKenzie served as pastor in Alberta, Quebec and Newfoundland before becoming a full-time professor of religious studies at Queen's College Anglican Seminary, Memorial University, in 1972.

Affectionately referred to as "Dr. Mac" by his students, he received the inaugural Memorial University President's Award for Teaching Excellence in 1988.

"He had an excellent relationship with his students. He brought a sense of pastoral care to the classroom, forming personal relationships with his students," said Rev. Dr. Morley Hodder, head of religious studies while MacKenzie was at Queen's College.

"He had an amazing ability to communicate often with great enthusiasm and humour."

After 22 years at Queen's College, MacKenzie and his wife, Jay, retired to Nova Scotia. While living there, he taught at St. Francis Xavier University, preached in local churches and wrote prolifically. He published 10 books including three collections of sermons.

In 2001, the couple moved to Chilliwack, B.C., where MacKenzie passed away.

A memorial service is expected to take place at Salem, Pictou County, N.S., in the summer.

Reviews of some of his books can be found on presbyterianrecord.ca ■ —*SV*

Radio Host and Pastor Dies

REV. GLENN COOPER, a pastor, former staffer at national church offices and radio host of *The Hymnbook*, died suddenly on Jan. 9. He was 67.

'The message of Micah 6:8 reminds us of the need to *do* justice, since it is not an object to be obtained, a destination to be reached or an intellectual ideology to be imagined but a reality achieved through concrete action'

Cooper worked in radio broadcasting prior to his ordination in 1976. He went on to pastor churches in Point Edward and Brigden, Ont., before becoming associate secretary of Resource Production and Communication in 1992. In 1998, he returned to pastoral ministry—this time as minister to St. Andrew's, Westville, N.S., where he served for 10 years.

"I've never met a man more devoted to what he was doing. When it came to doing funerals and visiting the sick, I don't know if there was anyone who could have done a better job," said Alonzo Ferguson, an elder at St. Andrew's.

After retiring from pastoral ministry in 2008, Cooper stayed active, biking the Cabot Trail with his wife Rev. Iona MacLean and singing bass in the PresbySingers, a chamber choral group in Pictou County.

"He was passionate about music, especially Canadian choral music. He was sure about what he loved and I think he secretly wanted you to share his enthusiasm," said friend and colleague, Rev. Jeffrey Lackie.

"Often he would give his sermon and then skip up into the choir and join us for the anthem, and oh boy was it nice when you got to sing beside him," said Bill Thompson, who served as clerk of session while Cooper was at St. Andrew's.

His radio show, *The Hymnbook*, combined Cooper's love for music, faith and radio. Broadcast by several stations, his colleagues said the show was a source of pride and joy for Presbyterians in Pictou County and beyond. He hosted *The Hymnbook* until his death. ■ —*SV*

WCRC to Leave Geneva

AFTER 65 YEARS IN GENEVA, Switzerland, the World Communion of Reformed Churches will be relocating its offices to Hanover, Germany.

The move, scheduled for December, comes in response to concerns about the cost of running an organization in Geneva, including staff salaries and the high value of the Swiss franc. Most WCRC membership fees and donations are made in Euros or American dollars, which have dropped in value in the past several years compared to the Swiss franc. The move to Hanover is expected to save the organization more than $200,000 a year.

WCRC is a network of Protestant churches, representing 80 million Christians in 108 countries. ■ —*with files from WCRC*

'The Need to Do Justice'

THEOLOGIANS AND ACTIVISTS MET in Toronto in late November to discuss the theme of the World Council of Churches' assembly, "God of life, lead us to justice and peace."

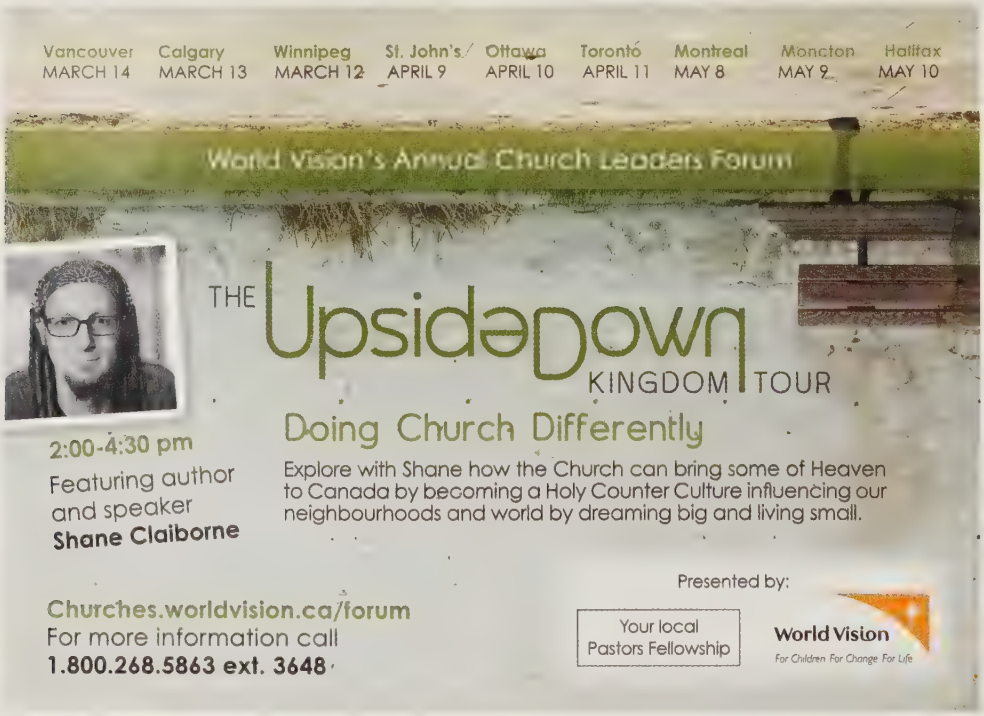
"Churches cannot challenge injustice if they do not recognize its entrenched presence within the Church itself," the group said in the theological reflection it prepared. "[The message of Micah 6:8] reminds us of the need to *do* justice, since it is not an object to be obtained, a destination to be reached or an intellectual ideology to be imagined, but a reality achieved through radical concrete action."

The group of 25 theologians and activists make up the WCC's working group on Just and Inclusive Communities. They consider the perspectives of racial and ethnic minorities, migrants, indigenous peoples, India's Dalits (or members of the "untouchable" caste) and people with disabilities.

The group met at the headquarters of the United Church of Canada from Nov. 25 to 29.

The working group also made a series of suggested revisions to documents intended for the upcoming WCC assembly in Busan, South Korea, which is scheduled from Oct. 30 to Nov. 8.

For more information on the assembly or the WCC, see oikoumene.org ■ —*CW*



'His Life Bridged a Cultural Divide'

NIGERIAN TRAILBLAZER IS LAID TO REST. **BY SETH VEENSTRA**

Rev. Dr. Inya Okata Agha Ude on the cover of the October 1960 issue

The first Nigerian minister to receive a degree from Knox College, Toronto, has been laid to rest. A funeral was held in Nigeria for Rev. Dr. Inya Okata Agha Ude on Dec. 28.

Ude was already an ordained pastor when he arrived in Canada in 1960 on a scholarship provided by the PCC's General Board of Missions.

He enrolled at the University of Toronto, where he received a B.A. in philosophy, then went on to do a Bachelor of Divinity at Knox College.

"He became the face of our partnership in the 1960s," wrote Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency and a former missionary to Nigeria.

After receiving his degrees Ude wrote: "This is a landmark in the history of the Presbyterian Church in Nigeria and one for which Canada and Nigeria ought to join hands in giving thanks to God."

"I am looking to ... a time when the concept of mission fields will disappear altogether and then it will be possible for a Formosan [Taiwanese] to serve a term in Nigeria, a Nigerian in India, an Indian in Canada and so on 'round God's world."

The son of an evangelist, Ude was born New Year's Day, 1929, in Unwana. His father died when he was eight, and Ude finished primary school as a ward of the Church of Scotland. He taught science for nine years before responding to a call to ministry.

He graduated Trinity Union Theological College in 1958 and was ordained the following year. After his studies in Canada, he returned to the college as a teacher. During the first year of the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), he became acting principal and secured funds to evacuate students and faculty to Ghana and Sierra Leone. The same year he married Bassey Itam Ude and moved to Sierra Leone.

Before and after the war, Ude, an Ibo, refused to stoke tribal prejudices, often opening his home to guests of diverse backgrounds.

"His life bridged, for us, a cultural divide which other people experience to this day," said friends of Ude's family at his funeral.

When he returned to Nigeria after the war, Ude re-established Trinity College, then went abroad for further studies. He received a Master's degree in Theology at Princeton, then a Doctorate of Philosophy at Fuller.

On his return to Nigeria in 1979, he was posted to Lagos Presbyterian Church, Yaba.

Later, he was unanimously elected Moderator of Synod—the highest court of the church in Nigeria at that time.

In 1989, he retired from active work in the church, though he continued to teach, first at the University of Calabar, then the University of Uyo and finally Hood Speaks Theological Seminary.

He was given a National Award and named an Officer of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. ■

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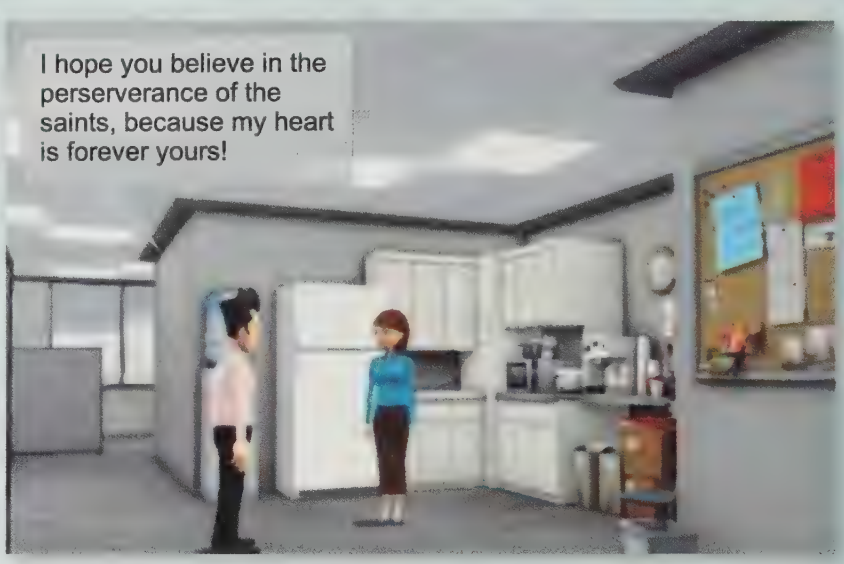
Pick-up Lines for Calvinists

JUST IN TIME FOR VALENTINE'S DAY. **BY BRAD CHILDS**



A Calvinist seminary student fails spectaculary at trying to pick up a girl.

JUST FOR SINGLES

In honour of February, the month of little chubby babies that travel the world looking to shoot people with heart-shaped arrows, I've included this little video of Calvinist pick-up lines for all you single Presbyterians. Here are a few to get you started:

"Baby you are so fine; it is women like you that make particular redemption a necessity."

"I hope you believe in the perseverance of the saints because my heart is forever yours."

FIND IT @ **Search YouTube for "Calvinist pick-up lines"**

IPHONE CASES

The good folks at Red Bubble are selling religious and Christian themed iPhone and iPad cases. Now not all of them are meant for every Christian. They do have the now iconic internet meme "Jesus Raptor" — plus there's Jesus riding a dinosaur or Jesus with aviator sunglasses on. Those may not be for everyone. Still others have sayings printed on them like, "Have you prayed about it as much as you've complained about it?" Or simply, "Trust Him." They also have cross designs, printed verses, famous art, and literally hundreds of others to look through.

FIND IT @ **Search redbubble.com for "Christian Jesus iPhone cases"**

Rev. Brad Childs is minister at First, Regina.

Revisiting the Road to Emmaus

ONE CHURCH'S STORY OF TRANSFORMATION. **BY SETH VEENSTRA**

Members of Duff's were at a loss.

They tried pouring energy into child and youth programs; they worked to make their worship services more inclusive. Still, nothing substantial changed. The congregation was shrinking.

"We're a rural church—we don't have a large base to draw from in the first place," said Rev. Marty Molengraaf, who has served the church in Puslinch, Ont., for the past 10 years.

Then came the Emmaus Project. Like the disciples whose eyes were opened to the traveller they met on the road to Emmaus, participants in the project were to consider where people in their communities might best encounter the resurrected Christ.

Organized by the national church, the Emmaus conference brought together representatives from presbyteries that had applied to participate.

"Emmaus helped us recognize Christendom is done. Just having a church service and inviting people to church isn't going to cut it anymore. We needed to meet people out there in the community, rather than expect that if we have a good service, a great choir, dynamic worship, that if we have all the right programs, people are going to come," said Marty, who was both a representative from the Presbytery of Waterloo-Wellington and a member of the design team.

"The tipping point came during a session meeting. The Spirit moved. It moved me as much as it moved the session. There was a sense of 'ah-ha, now we can see more clearly.' It was truly an Emmaus moment. Our eyes were opened and we could see Christ and Christ was pointing us in the direction of reaching out into the community. Around the table there was the sense of everyone being of one mind. It was a powerful meeting. I'll never forget that meeting for as long as I live."

Rev. Marty Molengraaf

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DUFF'S, PUSLINCH, ONT.

> 'Our eyes were opened and we could see Christ and Christ was pointing us in the direction of reaching out into the community'

Though they had a general direction, the church couldn't see a clear destination at first.

"To me, that's the wonder of how God works. When we were ready to step out in faith, then we were able to see opportunities we may not have seen if we weren't ready."

One such opportunity was campus ministry at the university in nearby Guelph, where a half-time chaplaincy position was available.

"We always dreamed of engaging the youth in our community—going beyond the youth programs most churches have and finding a way to engage youth where they're at. We wanted a model where we could enable youth to find belonging and identity within the community they lived in—and then recognize the church as part of that community."

Marty applied. After he was chosen he and the congregation developed a unique agreement. Rather than pay Marty directly, the Ecumenical Campus Ministry would pay Duff's for chaplaincy services. The congregation would, in turn, commit to making campus ministry an integral part of their congregational ministry.

With the money they are paid, the church can employ a youth engagement worker and a parish nurse who focuses on seniors. During regular luncheons at the church, seniors receive health education and sometimes free consultations with a pharmacist, optometrist, or representative of the Canadian Hearing Society. Marty continues as a pastor at Duff's, though his hours are condensed.

"It's a great idea for churches located in a university town," said Clarence Swanton, an ECM board member.

The church contributes in two key areas: food and administrative support.

Every week a core group of students meet. Half an hour before the bulk of attendees arrive, Marty and the student leadership team go over business items and plan out larger events. Once the rest of the group arrives, they all share a vegan meal catered by members of ➤

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the congregation.

Students share what Marty calls "ubuntu moments." Rooted in an ancient African tradition, "'ubuntu' is almost synonymous with 'Kingdom of God,'" said Marty. "It means caring for our neighbours as we care for ourselves. When someone is in pain we are in pain. When there's happiness and joy we are affected by that, too." After sharing moments where they experienced ubuntu, someone in the group makes a presentation on a subject seen from the perspective of ubuntu, such as animal rights, gender equality or interfaith dialogue. Then there's an informal discussion.

As I shadowed Marty for a day on campus, I met some of the students on his leadership team. While they were hesitant to describe themselves as Christians, they were excited to participate in ECM—now renamed Campus Ubuntu—and encourage their fellow students to explore the world through the lens of ubuntu.

As Duff's begins a "process of visioning" to plan for the future, they will be deciding if they have the capacity to set up three-year or five-year contracts for their parish nurse and youth engagement worker. They're also pursuing community partnerships that could enable them to be less financially dependent on Marty's chaplaincy position.

While Marty agrees Duff's model is an innovative one, he seems less eager to prescribe it to other churches, recognizing that every church exists in its own context.

"I'm just telling the story. The key to the story is to say, 'okay how can we be engaged with the people in our community?' It doesn't have to be chaplaincy. It doesn't have to be parish nursing. This is our response to Emmaus. We're hoping other churches have good news stories to share, too."

Do you have an Emmaus story? Please share it with us. ■

Seth Veenstra is the Record*'s staff writer.*

Theology 101

PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTO

OUR FEATURE ON LIVING FAITH

Living Faith is a declaration of faith of the Presbyterian Church. You can download it at presbyterian.ca. We suggest you read the passage being discussed each month.

ADDITIONAL READING: How Does Jesus Save? (September 2009) and Sola Fide (April 2012). The articles can be found at presbyterianrecord.ca.

Do You Need to Be Saved?

RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR HEALING AND WHOLENESS.

BY HARRIS ATHANASIADIS

LIVING FAITH 3.6 (SALVATION IN CHRIST)

I was sitting in my office looking out at teenagers making their way to school. I thought to myself, "How many of them think about salvation? How many of them believe that the thing they need most deeply, beyond success in their studies, their relationships, their future, is salvation by God?" And yet, the opening words of *Living Faith* 3.6 are all about salvation. The statement never questions whether anyone cares about salvation. Following our Presbyterian forbearers, *Living Faith* considers the bigger question of how we are saved, not whether we care or ever worry about it. It makes me realize how different the times are in which we ➤

Jesus says that he came not for those who are well but for those who are broken in some way and know they need healing

live compared to the times of the Protestant reformers. Using the example of the apostle Paul, they developed the kind of language we find in this section: "Salvation comes from God's grace alone received through faith in Christ. From all eternity, and through no merit on our part .... we are made acceptable to God. Before the world was made we were chosen ... predestined to be like Christ and to serve God." This is powerful stuff... unless, of course, we just don't care.

In the time of our forbearers there was no question that people were hungry for salvation and anxious about it. The real debate was focused on how it happened, not whether it was of ultimate concern. People had to be taught right doctrine about God, themselves and the world, about their relationship to God and God's intention and will for them as human beings. This was of ultimate concern.

In Jesus' day it was a little different. While still concerned about the how of salvation, there was little distinction between the spiritual and the material dimensions of life. Most people were concerned about the tyranny of domination by Romans, religious aristocrats, corrupt kings, legalistic religious and militant nationalists, about food, clothing, shelter, social safety and stability. The devil and his minions tormented people's bodies as much as their souls. Salvation was of ultimate concern for them, too, and they needed a messiah to save them.

But we don't live in Jesus's day or the day of the reformers. We live today in a more prosperous part of the world, where the problems and challenges of life are often hidden beneath anxieties about making it, living our passion in relationships and careers, having enough to retire comfortably, freedom to travel and do other things we want to do ... But do we need salvation?

As a preacher who is working out my theology week by week wrestling with the scriptures and my own experiences and those of my people, I've come to some realizations at this stage of the journey. Jesus says that he came not for those who are well but for those who are broken in some way and know they need healing; that it is those who are forgiven much who love much; that he came not to call the "righteous" but "sinners" to repentance and forgiveness—salvation. The word salvation itself comes from older words related to healing and making whole. This means that unless someone recognizes they need healing and wholeness and that this is of ultimate concern, then salvation has little significance for them.

I've come to realize that we live as Christian communities in a time akin to that of Jesus; those who are broken or fully consciousness of their vulnerability will hunger for the healing and wholeness of salvation. It is those who recognize their limits and yearn for communion with a great Other, and with others who are also in touch with their vulnerability, who will embrace worship and recognize their need for a spiritual community centred on the gospel. Those who are successful, popular, happy all the time (or who don't want to face reality), those who feel strong, confident, safe and secure will not be compelled by the gospel in the same way. Maybe we know something about the reality of the human condition that they don't?

Well, what many of us realize is that recognizing our need for healing and wholeness may be the catalyst to the salvation of God. And this journey through healing to salvation may lead us to begin to see ourselves and our world in a whole new way. We may begin to discover abundance, beauty, peace, hope and love not outside but through our brokenness, vulnerability and fragility. Not by denying it or running away from it but by developing courage, wisdom, insight, compassion and generosity through which we may discover ourselves before God and see God working in us to mend our vulnerable, broken world. Is this not what the cross of Christ is all about?

So, what does it mean to be chosen, predestined, called to an eternal purpose and all that? Perhaps it's about the joyous experience of having been found in our need and transformed on our journey so that we become partners with God and others in community, reaching out to the world in compassionate service, inviting others to friendship in a fellowship of salvation.

What about those young people walking to school? Could some of them discover they need something all their schooling, success, popularity and health can never provide? Can they realize that the deepest yearning in them is for something only God can give? That they are really in need of spiritual healing and wholeness, that they are vulnerable and fragile, that the richest beauty and love in them can only flourish when they offer up their created potential in the service of a God who calls them and has a dream for them that is much larger than the small dreams this world teaches them to go after?

We hope and we pray. But we gather to worship and listen for the healing, saving word of God in our vulnerable, fragile communities, rejoicing that we have been called and destined by God for glory through no power of our own, but by sheer grace beyond comprehension. What a treasure to share with those who are hungry for some really good news ... For salvation! ■

Rev. Dr. Harris Athanasiadis is minister at St. Mark's, Don Mills, Toronto.

Conspicuous Faithfulness

WHAT WILL YOU TAKE ON FOR LENT? **BY LAURENCE DEWOLFE**

Ash Wednesday
Season of Lent, February 13, 2013
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

What will you, your family, or your congregation take on for Lent? You might have pancakes for supper on Shrove Tuesday. You might have a Bible study on Wednesdays during Lent.

Presbyterians do Lent on Sunday. We use the liturgies from Presbyterian World Service and Development. Our bulletin covers have purple borders. We avoid hallelujahs and praise Gods in our hymns. Preachers may preach on spirituality or social justice. Lenten worship may feel a little wintry.

But Sundays don't count in the forty days. Sundays in, not of, Lent can refresh us, so we work harder at our discipleship every other day.

The Ash Wednesday gospel is worth re-reading throughout the season. We may take these words of Jesus as reason for our typically understated witness and personalized spiritual practice. Does going to an Ash Wednesday service and spending the rest of the day with a smudge on your forehead go against Matthew 6:1?

Jesus is angry when he looks at the recognized religious elite and sees no balance. Their practice is all about demonstration and has nothing to do with transformation. He says those who parade their piety "have their reward." Does he mean God doesn't bother to listen to prayers that are really meant for others to hear?

Giving alms, sharing wealth with those in need, is hard to hide. It might make a difference in someone's life. But if the giver takes credit for it, he has his reward. Fasting, giving up things that satisfy our bodies for the sake of our souls, is hard to hide. It takes a physical toll. Jesus says the one who fasts should smile. It's a better witness, and leads to a ➤

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better reward (verse 18).

Jesus' words condemn imbalance. They don't rule out acts of conspicuous faithfulness.

Jesus challenges us to go in with intense focus and deep humility. He doesn't tell us to hide what we take with us when we say, "Amen" and go back out into the world.

Is our imbalance a way of discipleship that is so personal, so internal, no one could ever guess we're Christians? Our neighbour, with his smudged forehead, sure stands out. A public sign can be a witness to what's deep in the heart. Maybe the gospel for us is, "Practice your piety before others in order to be seen by them."

Your elderly Catholic neighbour goes to Mass every day as a Lenten discipline. You see her come and go, and there's something even more winsome than usual about her. The young couple next door go to that church in the movie theatre. They've covenanted with some friends to spend two evenings each week in February downtown, sharing cocoa and sandwiches with people on the street. Do you have an old blanket they could give to someone who needs it?

Your daughter brings a Lenten calendar home from Sunday school. She asks if the whole family can take on each day's assignment at suppertime. It's just a five-minute assignment: Say a prayer. Read a verse of scripture. Find out about someone in need and talk about what you can do for them. Practicing your piety together can lead you to go deep on your own.

What will you take on for Lent? We can all think more seriously of things we ought to let go of to restore balance in our lives. Lent's for practicing how to live the new life that comes at Easter. Giving up something isn't easy. Taking on something is even harder. But it's worth it. ■

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe is on sabbatical from Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

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The Cause of Christian Unity

EXCITING TIMES IN THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

BY WILL INGRAM

We are living through one of the most exciting eras in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ, but most of us do not even realize it. Rather, our focus on local congregational issues, or on denominational challenges, or on the perceived decline of the church's cultural influence, or on the disunity of the church throughout the world leads us to overlook the historic changes that are taking place.

In 1054, a schism occurred between the Western half of the church (which evolved into the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions) and the Eastern half of the church (which evolved into the various Orthodox churches such as the Greek, Russian, Armenian, Coptic and Oriental Orthodox churches). Almost 1,000 years have elapsed since that historic division. However, in our own time, this division is starting to be overcome in significant ways. Within the past decade, for example, ➤

successive Popes in the Roman Catholic Church and successive Ecumenical Patriarchs in the Orthodox Church, as well as many important leaders in both denominations, have been meeting together to deepen levels of mutual understanding. A thousand years of division are not overcome immediately, but more progress has been made in the past few decades than at any other time in the past millennium.

At the same time, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation have been involved in dialogues which led, in 1999, to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. This Declaration was a massive step towards the resolution of one of the central theological controversies at the heart of the Protestant Reformation. Moreover, as the Roman Catholic Church celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, it is interesting to realize that many of the changes that were called for by our reformed (and Presbyterian) ancestors at the time of the Reformation, including the importance of the celebration of worship in the common languages of the people, the importance of the ministry of the laity, the centrality of the Bible in Christian life and practice, and a greater openness to other streams of the Christian tradition, have now been embraced by the Roman Catholic Church. The idea that the Roman Catholic Mass would only be celebrated in Latin now seems an unbelievably anachronistic idea, and yet, it is only 50 years since this change took effect. In these, and in many other ways, some of the most divisive theological arguments of the Reformation are being addressed and overcome.

Those who think the church is dying need to pay more attention to the growth that is taking place in other parts of the world

Other changes have also been taking place. In 1982, the World Council of Churches published a document entitled *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* which articulated areas of common understanding in matters of theology, ecclesiology and the sacraments. As a result, there is a greater acceptance across denominational lines of the legitimacy of baptism and even, in certain cases, recognition of the validity of ordained ministries. There is much work to be done but there can be no doubt that new levels of mutually respectful dialogue are underway.

At the Global Assembly of the WCC, which will take place in the fall of 2013, consideration will be given to a renewed articulation of the Christian understanding of mission and evangelism, and a renewed articulation of the nature of Christian unity. These new statements offer promising opportunities for deepened understanding and shared perspectives.

Even as these historic divisions are being addressed and overcome, significant shifts are occurring in the church worldwide. Those who think the church is dying need to pay more attention to the growth that is taking place in other parts of the world, and particularly in the so-called Global South. This shift will have significant impacts on the priorities, practices and emphases in the church in the coming centuries.

But, one might ask, do these developments have any impact on our congregations or in our own lives? Do these changes actually affect our daily experiences as Christians in Canada?

It is a good question, but the answer is evident in every one of our communities.

After all, since the end of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the conflicts in Sarajevo, there is nowhere in the world where Christians are attacking each other along denominational lines. Such a claim could rarely, if ever, be made for the past 500 years. Conflicts may yet arise, but it is important to celebrate that peaceful ways are being discovered for Christians, and for nations which have been historically influenced by the Christian tradition to be in dialogue and in relationship with each other.

The legacy of these historic conflicts, and the promise of a more peaceful

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future, can be seen in virtually every city and town in Canada. Although we may never have experienced the terrible religious wars that have plagued the history of Western Europe for so many centuries, almost every small Canadian town and city provides ample evidence of the effects of those European conflicts. When we drive through a small Canadian town and see a Presbyterian, a Christian Reformed, a Roman Catholic, an Anglican, and a Lutheran church, all within a few blocks of each other, we rarely pause to realize that these denominational identities are rooted in European church conflicts and not Canadian ones.

It is good to remember there are more similarities in outlook, ethics, spiritual practice and cultural assumptions between the members of each of those communities than similarities with the historical movements which gave rise to each of those denominations. That is, most of us, as Presbyterians, have more in common with the members of the Anglican or Lutheran congregations in our own communities than we do with Martin Luther in Wittenburg, Thomas Cranmer in England, or John Knox in Edinburgh. Moreover, the increasing numbers of Presbyterians from other parts of the world—from Asia, from Africa, from Eastern Europe and from the Caribbean—are helping us to redefine our entire concept of Canadian Presbyterian identity, history and unity.

Even in our communities and families, this deepened awareness of our unity affects us in profound ways. The animosity that once existed between denominations is rarely, if ever, experienced anymore. Most clergy interact well with each other regardless of denominational affiliation, and most members of the church celebrate the legitimate faith of their friends and neighbours of other denominations. Rarely, if ever, do we hear of families in which Protestants are discouraged from marrying Roman Catholics, a reality which in the recent past caused great difficulties in many families.

So where are we in our journey towards ecumenical unity and the fulfillment of that ecumenical vision for which Christ prayed, that they all might be one?

As Presbyterians in Canada, it is important for us to acknowledge that we are often reticent to ponder the question of visible unity, largely because of the legacy of the Church Union movement in the years leading up to 1925. There are few who still remember all of the details of the Union debates which led two-thirds of the Presbyterian Church in Canada to enter into the United Church, but that division continues to exert an influence upon us, perhaps most explicitly in our continued lack of confidence about the role that we could play, as a reformed and reforming denomination, in wider Canadian society. Moreover, controversial issues—from issues related to theology, ethics, the role of women, the dynamics of authority and power in the church, and the correct interpretation of certain scriptural passages—continue to present significant challenges to the movement towards visible unity amongst the various denominations in Canada.

Rather than allowing this reluctance to dampen our commitment to the cause of Christian unity—for which Jesus himself prayed in John 17—we should embrace our ecumenical calling with renewed enthusiasm. There is much to celebrate, there is much progress that has already occurred, and there is much work yet to be done. We accept each other's baptisms; we honour each other's spirituality; we learn from the gifts and strengths that other denominations offer to the one Body of Christ; we are not in significant conflict with each other; we are addressing the theological differences of the past; we are even beginning to work at more informed and respectful relationships with other religious traditions, without compromising our own theological convictions. We do not yet break bread at one table, but let us press forward in the knowledge that the historic momentum in the very recent past can carry us forward into a bright and promising future.

We are not yet fully unified as the Body of Christ in this world. But we are making progress. Thanks be to God. ■

> There is nowhere in the world where Christians are attacking each other along denominational lines. Such a claim could rarely, if ever, be made for the past 500 years

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Rev. Will Ingram is minister at St. Andrew's, King Street, Toronto.

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The Word of God

THE BIBLE IS INSPIRED AND INFALLIBLE. **BY JOHN FRASER**

A matter that is of great concern to me is how the church for the past number of years has been viewing the Bible. I had a minister in a sister denomination say to me, "The Bible is not the word of God but the word of man." I had someone say that they don't read portions of the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, because they simply don't agree with what is being said.

Then, there are those who love to pick on the apostle Paul and they will say with a laugh, "Well, you know that's Paul and we all know what Paul is like." What about the overused claim, "That statement is simply a matter related to its time and really doesn't have anything to say to us today?" Then, there is the coup de grace, "Very learned people today tell us that certain statements mentioned in the Bible disagree with modern science. We prefer to accept modern science."

Wow, where does that leave us? If we are going to accept the words of specialists over biblical statements and creeds then we might just as well toss the Bible out or rewrite it completely. I don't know of a man or woman of science today who will tell you that a virgin birth is possible, that the miracles recorded in both the Old and New Testament are possible or that the resurrection of a dead body is possible. So whose word will we accept? We have literally torn the Bible up into little bitty pieces, some of which we accept with modification, of course, while other pieces we will discard as totally unbelievable and therefore non-applicable.

I believe and I was brought up in a church that believed the Bible in total is the word of God. Whether it is the apostle Paul or Jesus who is speaking, it is one and the same: God's word. The Old Testament is as much the word of God as the New Testament and so we cannot make the claim that we believe in the God of Love as proclaimed in the New Testament but we have problems with the God of Justice found in the Old Testament for they are both one and the same God. I tend to agree with a colleague in a sister denomination who once said, "I prefer to believe the words of those who were closer to the actual event than someone who is writing about it today."

I am one who still believes that the Bible is the inspired, infallible and inerrant word of God. We have to recapture the wonder and awe of God's Holy Word and start living by it rather than playing with it. ■

Rev. John Fraser is minister at St. Andrew's, Hamilton, Bermuda.

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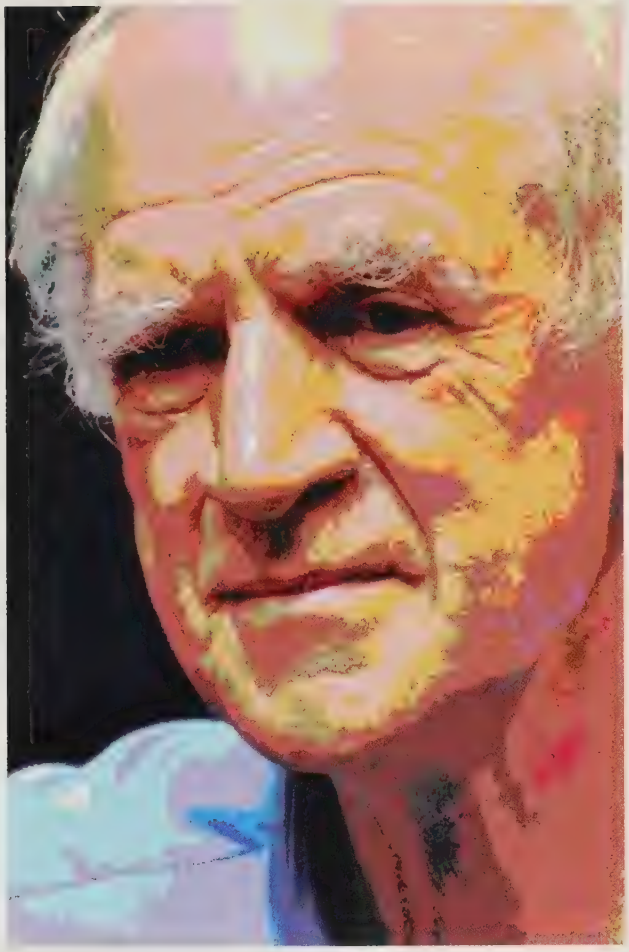


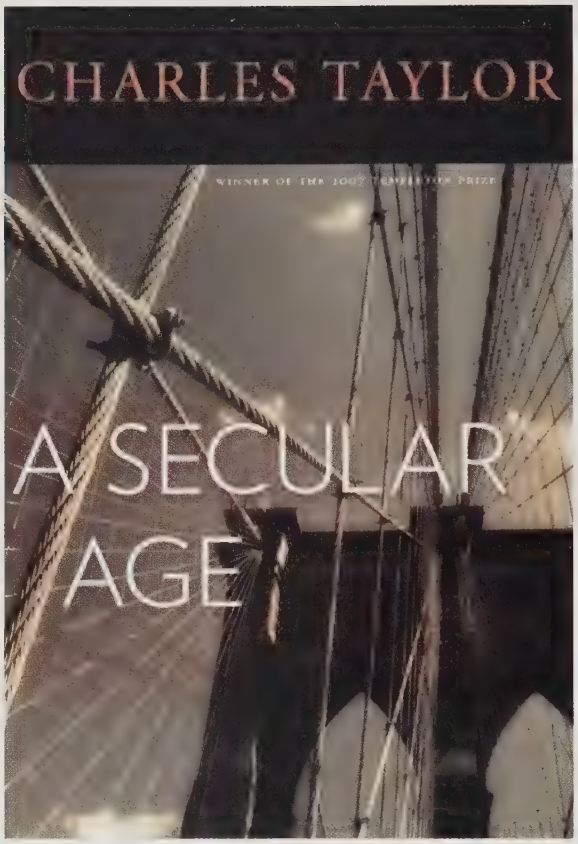
Living Together in Diversity

A CONVERSATION WITH CHARLES TAYLOR. **BY BARRY MACK**

Charles Taylor, philosopher and author of A Secular Age, *(reviewed in the October 2012 issue) participated in a community education event organized by Prof. Norman Cornett in Montreal last November. Rev. Dr. Barry Mack was present at the event and had an opportunity to share in the dialogue.*

At 81, Charles Taylor is still a handsome and impressive figure. Impressive also is his generosity of spirit and contagious optimism about the possibilities of interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Clearly, he is concerned about the potential of a "clash of civilizations" in Canada, and hopes Quebec society will not succumb to the deep-seated social alienation so evident in the banlieues of Paris.

His academic interests have always been linked to political engagement. He ran for the NDP against Pierre Trudeau in 1965 in the riding of Town of Mount Royal. More recently, he was appointed, along with Gérard Bouchard (brother of the former premier) by the Quebec government to chair the 2007 Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences. More popularly known as the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, it held hearings ➤



throughout the province on the subject of the "reasonable accommodation" of immigrants.

Taylor's refrain during several hours in which he effortlessly fielded questions in English and French was the importance of the dialogue that grows out of personal friendships with our neighbours. They are, above all, other human beings in all of their rich complexity and variety rather than members of a group labelled as "the Other." He recalled the Montreal of his youth in the 1930s, a city of multiple solitudes in which ethnic and religious groups stuck to their own. He draws strength and encouragement from how much has changed over his lifetime—a development led by the artistic community—and hopes Canadians will avail themselves of the rich possibilities for friendship. That was the challenge left in the air at the end of the evening. Legal and constitutional arrangements are not a sufficient basis for civil society to flourish. They need to be supplemented and underwritten by a web of social relationships and shared understandings.

BARRY MACK: If dialogue is essential to creating solidarity in diverse societies like ours, where do you see concrete examples of such constructive dialogue? Where are people or communities really getting through to each other?

CHARLES TAYLOR: In some schools in Montreal there are people from all sorts of different backgrounds. Where there hasn't been any cause for one group to have been raised up against the other, students just end up having friends who are Muslim or Sikh or whatever. Just in the course of normal living they feel that as human beings they can relate to them.

The society which has a high proportion of that kind of side-by-side living is a society which is largely immune to the mobilization of hate or distrust by groups who want to do that, because they just can't see their friend Ali or Fatima as a dangerous person. When they are told that all Muslims are dangerous they say, "Those people are crazy." That is what can defend us against the growth of absurd stereotypes that can easily circulate and which stand in the way of our being able to live together.

You can't mandate friendship. You can't pass a law: "Get a friend." Such relationships can't be engineered but they can be encouraged. You can take small steps in the right direction to promote opportunities that just might spark something and help out.

[The political question is] to what extent do people become mobilizable behind absurd stereotypes in order to direct them against Muslims or other groups? Kids who have been to school together will say, "Forget it." They will never be mobilized. How can we reduce the number of people who are mobilizable [in hate campaigns]? The image I have often used is that of the fire break. When a prairie fire breaks out, somebody builds a ditch so that the fire can't jump over it. Any friendship across these differences is a kind of mini fire break in your society. The more you have, the more you are proof against these irrational prairie fires that constitute these mobilizations against the Other. We need to find a way of creating these fire breaks.

MACK: But authentic dialogue is very difficult, is it not? In Christian-Jewish dialogue, for example, it is very hard to talk honestly about the political situation in Israel, West Bank settlements and so on. Even people who have known each other for years and who can discuss many things find that very hard and awkward. Even impossible. Maybe it is also a Canadian thing. Nobody wants to be impolite. My Dutch wife says that Canadians are going to die of niceness.

TAYLOR: It is true that people often don't say what they really think about the Other. Dialogues where that happens are what I call minimal, pacifying dialogues that we use to convince each other that we are not total enemies. [Such conversations may have their uses] but they aren't enriching or revealing. Nor do they lead to any deeper sort of friendship. That can only happen when you can say, "I find that belief of yours very perplexing;" "I don't understand why you want to say that;" "I think it a very questionable moral position that you guys are taking." All these things can be said in a tone of voice that indicates you

You can't mandate friendship. Such relationships can't be engineered but they can be encouraged. You can take small steps in the right direction

really want to understand and are not just trying to score points in a debate.

What is bedevilling Christian-Jewish dialogue today is the fact that many Jewish organizations have slid into being apologists for the Israeli government as it now exists and that makes it impossible to talk frankly. It is very regrettable. It is a mystery to me how it happened, because I think the majority of American and Canadian Jews are rather dovish and open, but somehow their organizations managed to take this very strong apologetic stance on behalf of the present Likud government, which I think is doing terrible things for the future of Israel and Israelis—apart from his sort of thing will get you stuck, because if anyone is carrying the can for the official line then it is very hard to talk. (As a Catholic, I couldn't talk to people if I felt that I had to defend the present Pope all the time.)

The really fruitful dialogues, the ones that make these fire breaks are the ones in which nobody is carrying the can, officially, for any position. "I am a human being, I'm a Catholic. Here's my faith. If you want to know why, we'll talk about it." That's the kind of [dialogue] that really works. There is actually something tremendously rewarding about it, and that's why I feel that we are missing these great opportunities, humanly speaking, in our kind of society. People are walled off from each other because they have so much suspicion. It is tremendously rewarding for atheists and Christians to be able to sit down and talk, but if you have the sort of attitude like [Richard] Dawkins then there is no possibility of discussion. And there is a corresponding attitude on the part of certain Christians who say, "You can't be a moral person if you are an atheist." Then we miss out on tremendous spiritual enrichment.

MACK: How would you compare your understanding of secularity with Dawkins's militant secularism?

TAYLOR: Well, there are two traditions of secularism in the West. We can identify one with France that arises out of an historical situation in which a church that had been dominant and had imposed itself on the whole society was challenged by a republican democratic movement. The thought was, we have to fight back against this Catholic outlook which (at the end of the Third Republic) was still largely monarchist. Secularism involved putting religion in its place and stopping it from overbearing the rest of society. And, of course, in that sort of situation secularism has an anti-religious or anti-clerical bias that is quite understandable.

The other tradition is the American, which starts off with the fact of tremendous variety among Protestants. Different denominations were established in each of the states or colonies. How do you set up a federal government? The first amendment to the American constitution states: Congress shall pass no law to establish any particular church. They were still going to allow various states to keep their established churches, and they didn't want one forced down their throat from the federal government.

This [Protestant matrix] expanded. The Catholics were let in, then Jews and now, we hope, Muslims. Finally, what you got was a notion of secularism in which all possible views could be accommodated. So one basic historical experience involved fighting back against a powerful religious force, the other evolved out of the question, "How do we live together in diversity and fairness and in a way that everybody can accept?" Our view in the [Bouchard-Taylor] Commission is that we have arrived at a point in Western societies where the first, originally French, ➤

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> We have to think in terms of the kind of secularism that suits us, which is a secularism of how to live together in diversity, not the secularism of defending ourselves against religious tyranny

motivation doesn't really make sense. There are no potentially dominant religious forces that are trying to push society back. (I'm not talking about elsewhere in the world, Egypt or Saudi Arabia, I'm talking about Western society.) So we have to think in terms of the kind of secularism that suits us, which is a secularism of how to live together in diversity, not the secularism of defending ourselves against religious tyranny.

Because Quebec has recently emerged from a situation not dissimilar to the French experience, there are some who want to cleave to this earlier Third Republic sort of secularism. I think that is a mistake in the world in which we now live.

MACK: Part of that evolution in Quebec society involves the new compulsory course in ethics and religious culture mandated by the Ministry of Education. It would seem to be an attempt to foster the sort of dialogue you are taking about within the school system. But some parents object to the non-confessional perspective from which the course is to be taught. Comments?

TAYLOR: It all depends on how such a course is taught. You need to teach the faith of others with respect. It is possible to teach things that you don't personally believe in and to treat the material with deep respect. I was very lucky as an undergraduate at McGill. There was a guy called Wilfrid Cantwell Smith. [A Canadian Presbyterian minister then recently arrived from teaching at the Forman Christian College in Lahore, Pakistan.] He was my teacher and he blew my mind. This guy was extraordinary. No rhetoric; he wore a gown and would walk up and down and almost mumbled. It was inspiring because this guy understood. He had this fantastic understanding of Islam in particular. He'd studied and taught in India and managed to make [other faiths] live for us. They were not his own position but he managed to make them living so we could understand why someone might believe in such a way and have such a faith.

That is what an education in the humanities is really about. What I find greatly missing around universities today is the inculcation of this sort of understanding of other positions, positions that you don't hold yourself. But a good teacher, a good education can make them real for you. You understand why. It's that sort of thing, which is the really rewarding part of the humanities. History, philosophy, social science ought to inculcate that. So how to promote this? Well, in each of your departments you work against the narrowness that exists in that discipline. I have frequented several disciplines in which there is lots of narrowness. So you have to work against that. It is an intellectual task—showing up the poverty of those people who, for example, have never read the Bible but just know it is all a bunch of nonsense, or clergy who hold that everything outside the Christian church is relativism. I can think of a particular cleric in Rome… *(Laughs.)* ■

Rev. Dr. Barry Mack is minister at St. Andrew's, St. Lambert, Que.

A New Thing

FIND INNOVATIVE WAYS TO WORSHIP GOD. **BY KAREN BACH**

Everywhere I look in the church today, I see congregations struggling to survive. Sunday schools are disappearing for lack of children. The average attendance at morning worship, I'm told, is usually between 70 and 100, but many congregations are lucky to have 30 to 50 people in the pews. Meetings are increasingly scheduled for mid-day because all the attendees are retired.

What, I ask myself, does this mean for God's church? Has God abandoned the church? Is the church going to sink slowly into oblivion as those of us for whom Sunday worship is meaningful die off? Will all of our church buildings become museums, relics of a bygone era? Is God angry with us?

In reading through scripture, there were certainly a number of times when the Israelites thought they had been abandoned by God, or that they were being punished by the Almighty. However, on each such occasion, God made it perfectly clear that God was still very much present with the people but that God was choosing to relate to people in a new way. God was doing a new thing, as we read in Isaiah 43. Why even in Jesus, God did a new thing, bursting into human history in the form of a vulnerable baby. Then on the cross, again God did a new thing, refusing to assert power and authority, proving the unconditional nature of God's love.

So perhaps instead of grieving the decline of the church we should be asking: "What new thing is God doing now?" How do we do this? How do we embody Christ in our communities? Where might we begin?

Historically, congregations have operated ➤

PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTO

There are enormous opportunities for churches to become relevant again, perhaps not in the way they once were, but in a way that is meaningful to the majority of people around them

on the premise: build it and they will come. However, in the current climate, this is no longer true. No longer is it sufficient to put an ad in the paper, hoping hordes will show up. In order to thrive in today's world the church must throw open its doors to let the world in and take God's new way of relating out into the world. In the Canada of today, Christians not only have to think creatively about how to be the church in their communities, they also have to be prepared to bring the gospel message to life through their actions.

Gateway Community Church, in the neighbourhood of Flemingdon Park in Toronto, did a new thing by changing its primary focus from worship to operating an afterschool program as a mission. Its success has been beyond expectations. Sadly, in this case, with no way within church polity to combine the elements of both church and mission, the congregation was officially closed. However, with the mission carrying the costs of the building, a few former members of the church, some of whom have become members of the board of the mission, continue to gather to worship on Sunday mornings in support of the ministry. Surprisingly, some new individuals have chosen to join them. Who knows where the future will lead them?

Increasingly, I hear of congregations that are reconfiguring themselves in order to be of greater service to the community in which they are situated. In centres small or large, there are enormous opportunities for churches to become relevant again, perhaps not in the way they once were, but in a way that is meaningful to the majority of people around them. All that is required is to move out into the community and ask the question: What would be most meaningful and helpful to the people in this community?

"How do we find that out?" you might ask.

For many years, the primary focus of churches has been to carry God's word to the people—to preach. Now it would seem God is calling us to listen, to pay close attention to what people have to say to us so that we can carry out God's will where we find ourselves.

Before launching Flemingdon Gateway Mission, we went out into the community to listen to the people, to build trust with them, and to ask what the church might do to make their lives better. This gave us a true snapshot of the community's resources and needs, and enabled us to make an informed decision about what programs we should offer. The ensuing afterschool program, that serves children of all faiths who live in the area, has seen numbers beyond our wildest dreams.

In other areas, a wide variety of responses may be appropriate. Some congregations may hear their neighbours asking them to ease their marginalized lives with assistance from congregation members and others as volunteers. Or, they may hear people asking them to redesign their space to make it more universally usable by groups from the community. They may determine that offering special meals to people who are lonely, or supporting parents by delivering afterschool care for their children would be most useful. Or, they may realize that it would be most helpful to focus on building community among their neighbours by hosting a weekly lunch and card game.

Without a doubt, transitioning to this new way of being will be tough. All paradigm shifts are tough. However, if we are to do the new thing God requires of us and help the church become relevant once again, we have to be willing to set aside our conviction that worship is all that is meaningful to God. We have to risk doing something new to connect the community in which we exist to the reality of God's love. And when we do this, we won't be able to help but gather to worship the amazingly, awesome God who calls us to do new things. ■

Rev. Dr. Karen Bach lives near Kingston, Ont.

PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTO

The Path of Renewal

PROCESS NOT DESTINATION.

BY JEREMY BELLSMITH

Renewal is God's intent for us and the world.

When we start talking about renewal lots of ideas (and even some old prejudices) come to mind. But at its core, renewal is God's life-giving, restorative work. It transforms us little by little into Christ's image and brings the world under Christ's reign.

This transformation can seem miraculous, idealistic, maybe even impossible. We're only humans after all. Humility isn't bad, but neither is a longing to experience the abundant, eternal life Christ came to offer. It's a life that flows out of us like living water (John 7:38). Our moments of feeling dry, weary, needing a change, or like butter spread on too much bread (to quote a hobbit) can be good. In those moments, if we'll listen, we'll hear God's Spirit wooing us, calling us to walk again the path to renewal.

Our first step on this path is to return. It might sound strange, but didn't Jesus begin his ministry by saying "repent, for the kingdom of God is among, within, near you?" Despite the connotation "repent" has today, Jesus was simply saying, stop doing what doesn't work and return to the life of God already present with you. As we let go of the behaviours, perspectives and perceptions that have only brought death, we are free to return to the abundant life offered to us.

Once we've returned, we can receive refreshment. My inner Presbyterian struggles with this. Like many of us, my sense of the spiritual is connected with the work I'm doing. But there are times when I need to be Mary instead of Martha; when I need to rest at the master's feet and wait for him to refresh me. Perhaps this is why Isaiah promised that those who waited on the Lord would renew their strength. It may also be why the Holy Spirit is often associated with water, because water has power to refresh dry, desert places. There comes a time on the path to renewal when we need to wait and simply let God's Spirit refresh us. The church has developed many spiritual practices for nurturing these times and they're worth exploring.

After refreshment, its natural to want to participate in God's renewing work. Water left standing will grow stagnant or dry up, but running water has transformative power as it shapes the land and brings life to the desert. As we become channels of Christ's Spirit he moves through us, he transforms the world into one that fits his vision and fuels our efforts with strengthening joy.

One last thing: Like the instructions on my shampoo bottle, we may need to "repeat as necessary." Life brings distractions that compete for our attention and before long, we may find ourselves feeling spent once more. Whether its personal, or transforming our world, renewal is less about destination than process. Daily, sometimes moment by moment, we can walk the path of renewal. Each time we return to Christ, receive refreshment and go out to renew God's world, we become recipients of, and participants in, God's transforming work. ■

Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith is minister at Burns, Ashburn, Ont.

PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTO

Viva vox evangelii
Judenstraße
Neustraße

LUTHERLAND

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE MEET IN WITTENBERG.

PHOTOS AND STORY BY LAURENCE DEWOLFE
ILLUSTRATION BY MARTIN O'NEILL

Clang, clang, clang went the trolley.

I stepped off the brick-paved street into the Market Square of Wittenberg. Before me was the beautiful Town Hall. To my left, a statue of Philipp Melanchthon, Luther's collaborator. To my right, Martin Luther. In between the two reformers, from my toes to the steps of the Town Hall, was the Wednesday Market. A little village of tents and trailers, offering doner kebabs, sweatpants, pork chops, belt buckles, fresh vegetables and knife sharpening. There were racks and racks of t-shirts, though none bore Luther's image.

Luther's image and story were all around. Up to the right stood the twin towers of the City Church, where Luther preached. Off to the left looms the tower of the Castle Church, where Luther nailed his theses to the door and where he lies entombed. Behind me was the home of Lucas Cranach the Elder, who painted the most famous portraits of Luther.

In a few short days I saw young Luther, old Luther, thin Luther, fat Luther, preaching Luther, thesis-nailing Luther, stone Luther, bronze Luther, papier-mâché Luther, Luther etched in glass, even dead Luther (in a portrait). I stayed at the Hotel Luther, where a larger than life statue of Luther greeted me and guarded the elevators.

In the morning I worshipped beside a monument to Luther's pulpit. In the evening I prayed a metre away from Luther's tomb. On Sunday I left the little town of Wittenberg and went to church in Leipzig, where I saw a plaque: Martin Luther Preached Here. I sent word home, "I feel like I'm in a Reformation theme park. I'm in Lutherland!" All the theme park lacked was a ride.

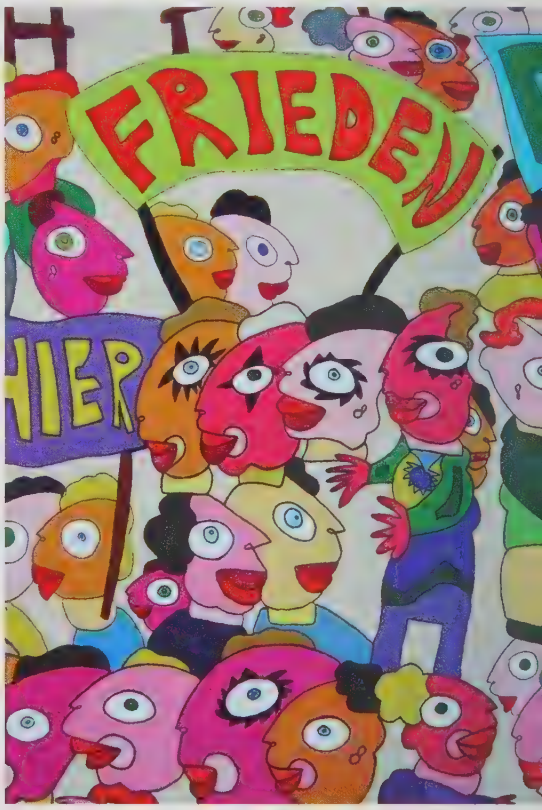
Clang, clang, clang went the trolley. There it was! The ride! A train of little cars that took tired pilgrims the length of the main street. Full of mostly elderly, mostly large, mostly German-speaking tourists.

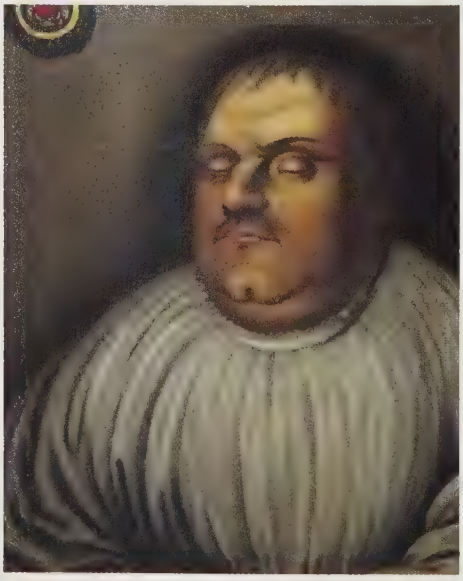
In August I spent a week in Wittenberg, in the former East Germany. The full name of the town is Lutherstadt Wittenberg. Luther City. Lutherland's not such a stretch. My mission was to attend the biennial meeting of Societas Homiletica, the international academic society for teachers of preaching. The theme was *Viva vox evangelii,* or, "Long live the gospel's voice." The phrase was often ascribed to, you guessed it, Luther.

Don't get me wrong. Luther's an interesting character. I found the immersion in the myth and cult of Luther fascinating. I was privileged to be part of a walking tour of the town, including Luther's house and the Luther Museum, with a guide who made it worth a university credit. He had a doctorate in history. His thesis topic was the commemoration of the Reformation in Germany since 1870.

I had an opportunity to meet and talk with professors and pastors from all over the world, to share a reflection group with colleagues from Europe, to share a day in Leipzig with new friends from Germany, Norway, South Africa and the United States. I was the only Canadian. One of the largest contingents was from Africa. There were Indian and Brazilian seminary ➤

MARTIN O'NEILL





Top: The City Church rises above the market place in Wittenberg;
Left: A portrait of Martin Luther on his deathbed by Lucas Cranach the Younger.

teachers and a woman from Greece, who called herself the only female homiletician in all of Orthodoxy. The 2014 meeting of Societas Homiletica will be in India.

I went to the conference because I'm working on a project about preaching in a global context. I also wanted to see how the churches live in post-unification Germany, and where preachers fit in both church and society. A long train ride followed my flight from Halifax to Frankfurt. A friend told me to watch as the train passed from the prosperous west of Germany into the former German Democratic Republic. Could I tell the difference?

The train sped past vast farm fields, through countless towns, along the back fences of city neighbourhoods. The further east it went, the more fallow fields I saw. Warehouses and factory buildings stood empty. Housing stock declined

Top: A train offers weary pilgrims a ride in Wittenberg;
Left: A mural in Leipzig tells the story of the rule and fall of East Germany.

The Communists called Luther a national hero and authorized commemorations of Luther's birth, marriage and death

in quality and condition. Town streets looked empty. And everywhere there were churches. Most were little. All were old. Across the fields of weeds, at the heart of dark towns, I saw churches.

Then the train stopped in Leipzig in a grand old station. All seemed bright and renewed. I rode another fast train to Lutherstadt Wittenberg, where all seemed clean and cared for. And under construction. As I walked out of the station I thought, "We're not in East Germany anymore."

There hasn't been an East Germany, a GDR, since 1990. Since re-unification the German government has pumped billions into the east, trying to raise the standard of living to western levels, and to jump-start the economy. We look on from Canada and see a thriving economy in Germany, and Germany is indeed strong. Yet the current Euro crisis is a new drain on German resources, which are already stretched by the ongoing cost of re-unification.

Cities like Leipzig are in the throes of massive, federally-funded infrastructure upgrades. Lutherland receives millions of Euros each year for the maintenance of heritage and promotion of tourism. Without the thousands of tourists and hundreds of students who pass through each year, the little town of Wittenberg would be empty. Halfway through the commemorative Luther Decade construction continues in preparation for the Luther Year in 2017.

State promotion of Luther, man and myth, is nothing new. The Prussian princes who ruled over Lutherland in the mid-19th century knew it was good business and sound politics. They built a new Castle Church for the prosperous Lutheran burghers of Wittenberg. It's a monument to all the European Reformations. The princes were Calvinists, not Lutherans. The central features of the church are bronzed "thesis doors" outside and Luther's tomb inside. Luther's words, "A mighty fortress is our God," ring the round tower, designed to look like a lighthouse, beaming Reformation light to all the world.

The Communists of the mid-20th century initially branded Luther a pariah because he took the side of the princes in the Peasants' War. It's the standard Marxist take on the Reformation. To curry favour with the Scandinavian socialist governments who were among the few in the world to recognize East Germany, a monument to the Finnish reformer Mikael Agricola was added to Luther's house. (Agricola once lived in the house.) In due time the Communists understood that a neat and tidy Lutherland was one of the few things they could show the world in their quest for credibility. They ensured no harm befell the little town. They called Luther a national hero and authorized commemorations of Luther's birth, marriage and death.

The first German government of the 21st century knows the power of a national symbol and the value of an international magnet for trolley-riding tourists and curious scholars. City and Castle Churches are both receiving facelifts in preparation for the big 500th anniversary. Melanchthon's house is undergoing a complete restoration, too. An archeological dig seeks the original walls of Luther's house, including the famous toilet where he confronted the devil. The whole town is kept spick and span. The bricked and cobbled streets are in good repair. Costumed Martins and Katys walk the street, greeting visitors, posing for pictures. (That's Katharina von Bora, Luther's wife.)

Where does the church fit in all of this? Small congregations still gather in the monumental churches. Baptisms and marriage blessings continue. State support guarantees that most parishes in Germany have pastors, even if the pews are almost empty. University theology departments have full enrollments and, one professor told me, students all want to be pastors. We used to say in Canada that depressions and wars fill the schools for ministry. I wondered if economic uncertainty drives young women and men in Germany toward what is still secure employment.

City churches, particularly in the east, are growing. Some large urban congregations are still strong. St. Thomas in Leipzig counts 4,500 members. On the August Sunday when I was there the church was almost full. After the service the pastor said about a quarter of those present were probably tourists. That meant 200 or more were parishioners. In Friday and Saturday services, when the boys' choir sings Bach cantatas, two-thirds of those present are visitors. The pastor's greatest challenge, she said, is preaching the gospel to those who only come for the music.

Church attendance under the Communists was closely monitored by state authorities, and clearly labeled as socially unacceptable. Preachers had to watch what they said to their aging congregations. Preachers in the former GDR who ➤

Vendors in Wittenberg; Bach's tomb in Thomaskirche (St. Thomas Church), Leipzig.

remember those days are still less inclined to speak of politics or social issues than their colleagues from the former west. The young preacher I heard in Leipzig, western-born Britta Taddiken, wasn't afraid to address current issues like unemployment among immigrants and a proposed ban on circumcision in hospitals. The living conditions and rights of immigrants, racism and religious freedom are of great concern to German churches.

Lutheran and Reformed churches in Germany are loosely knit into one national Protestant denomination. There are strong ecumenical ties between Protestants and Catholics. There are new and emergent-style churches in German cities, but the religious landscape is still dominated by historic Christian denominations. Muslim immigrants make up the fastest-growing segment of the population. Church attendance may no longer be significant to the majority population, but a distinct residue of Christendom remains. Most Germans would probably say theirs is a secular society, but secular in the truest sense of the word. A truly secular society doesn't exclude religion, nor does it privilege any religion, or any voice over any other. Younger Germans may insist on a definition that excludes religious presence or expression, but it's impossible to take the church out of German history or culture.

Any tour of grand old Leipzig, the heart of the city, must include two old churches. One is the Thomaskirche, where I worshipped. Luther may have preached there, but J. S. Bach played there. His grave is in the chancel. His monument is in a transept on the right. There's also a monument to Felix Mendelssohn, who brought the forgotten Bach back to the world's ears in the 19th century. Tourists fill the nave between services, and sometimes stumble in during worship, unaware the building still serves as a church. A climb up into the tower offers both a commanding view of the city and a history lesson from parishioners who serve as guides. Sunday services always include at least one solo on the Bach memorial organ. The pastor laughed as she said when the congregation argues over contemporary music in worship, they're talking about hymns written after the 18th century.

A tour must also include a visit to the Nikolaikirche. The old church building also fills with tourists each day. I noted the visitors were mostly German and younger than the pilgrims I met at Bach's church. The young pilgrims at St. Nicholas's were there because of events that occurred before most of them were born, but are still in living memory. In the fall of 1989 the old church building became the centre of quiet resistance to the Communist regime. Even when the infamous Stasi filled the pews to keep the people out, thousands gathered in the street on Monday evenings to pray, sing hymns, light candles and wait on God for change. Throughout the GDR the church was a quiet centre of resistance and hope. Change came.

In the heart of Lutherland I found another sign of the church alive. Not in one of the old churches, or at the Institute for Evangelical Preaching Culture, but in the hotel where I stayed. The Hotel Luther is part of a small chain of inns, all of which operate to support the Berlin City Mission. In my room I found a magazine advertising several chains of inns and spas, all called Christian Hotels. All offer reasonably priced accommodation, with profits supporting mission work throughout Germany.

I like to think visitors to Wittenberg are all pilgrims, who seek something spiritual in the midst of all the show. As amused as I was by Lutherland, I heard the gospel preached there, experienced Christian community, and renewed my connection with my spiritual heritage in the Reformation. I also felt at home, both as a Christian and a person of German heritage. I was caught by a spirit of place, and a spirit of time. My Calvinist heart wasn't moved when I saw Luther's tomb. I was more impressed by Bach's plaque as I walked past it to receive communion. My hero, after all, lies in an unmarked grave somewhere in Geneva. I still want to visit Calvinland some day soon. ■

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe is enjoying a sabbatical from Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

2013 CAMP LISTINGS

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website: campkeir.ca
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Nova Scotia

CAMP GEDDIE
website: campgeddie.ca
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CAMP MACLEOD
website: pccweb.ca/campmacleod
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CAMP D'ACTION BIBLIQUE
website: cabqc.ca
Camp d'action biblique is a bilingual camp where kids from all backgrounds learn who and whose they are in a dynamic, safe and caring environment. About 90 minutes east of Montreal.

GRACEFIELD CHRISTIAN CAMP AND RETREAT CENTRE
website: gracefieldcamp.ca
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Ontario

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Bearing Witness to Christ

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE. **BY JOHN VISSERS**

In November the Assembly Council adopted a motion that asked the church to examine whether it is wise stewardship to support three colleges financially. I spoke in favour of the motion because I believe it is time to think about how our church can prepare its leaders more effectively and efficiently. This motion provides an opportunity to do just that.

I also happen to think that we probably need only one theological institution, perhaps with multiple sites. But if the Assembly Council's motion simply becomes an exercise in cost-cutting and institutional downsizing, we'll have lost an important opportunity. Whether we have three colleges, two colleges, or one college is not the main point.

It is far more important that we consider the future of theological education in terms of the mission of the church. If we give priority to the reimagining and renewal of congregations as we said we should at last year's General Assembly, there will be implications for the way we educate and equip people for ordained ministry and Christian leadership.

So we should be asking: What kind of church is God calling us to become? What kind of leaders do we need? What kind of preparation will those ministers and leaders require? And what institutional structures and programs do we need to educate and equip them?

As I've been travelling the church this year, these are the questions I've been asking ministers, elders, congregations, young people, presbyteries, national staff and seminary leaders. And this is what I'm hearing.

PORTRAIT BY WESLEY BATES/THREEINABOX.COM

First, there is a deep commitment in our church to an educated leadership. The challenge of articulating the meaning of the gospel in secular post-Christian Canada will require more learning, not less.

Secondly, almost everyone agrees that we need to educate people in a missional model of congregational ministry. Congregations exist to bear witness to Jesus Christ in word and deed in local communities and to participate in the mission of God in the world. As one of my colleagues says, "We need ministers of mission, not ministers of maintenance, and certainly not ministers of mischief."

Thirdly, many people pointed out that our seminaries cannot do this alone. The theological schools must work with congregations and presbyteries and forge new partnerships with other centres of learning. Seminary professors should be congregational practitioners as well as scholars. The skills required to minister in local congregations today are best acquired and developed in local congregations.

In this regard, there is an emerging consensus that a three-year seminary program on its own cannot get the job done. In order to develop and sustain the practice of ministry a serious, disciplined program of post-seminary training is required. I was told it should be mandatory for all ministers for at least the first five years out. It was suggested that we might designate one of our existing seminaries to focus almost exclusively on this task, and create an institute for congregational life and renewal. Other centres of excellence might be housed in local flourishing congregations across the country where ministers and elders could share the best practices of ministry today.

I heard other suggestions as well: the need for more regional accessibility; the need for specialized courses in conflict management, new church development, and youth ministry; the need to consolidate our theological resources; the need for fewer but more gifted and better educated clergy. I heard a lot of anxiety and frustration to be sure.

But what I heard most often was a deep passion for the mission of the church, a deep longing for congregational revitalization, and a deep hope that the structures for theological education in the Presbyterian Church in Canada will increasingly reflect that passion and longing. For my money, that's a good place to begin a conversation about wise stewardship in theological education for the future. ■

Rev. Dr. John Vissers is director of academic programs at Knox College, Toronto.

People & Places

To make People & Places submissions, email: **peopleplaces@presbyterianrecord.ca**

Copetown Woods Golf Club, Copetown, Ont.

Friends and close colleagues surround Revs. John Hibbs and Anne Yee Hibbs as they celebrate the 50th anniversary of John's ordination.

Knox, Baddeck, and Ephraim Scott, South Haven, N.S.

Two churches combined their efforts to support the local Lions Club toy drive. Pictured with the white gifts are Rev. Brian Macleod and Don Morrison, clerk of session. Both are from Knox.

Mount of Olives, Jerusalem, Israel

Participants of the recent Presbyterian Middle East Study Tour gather for a group shot in the Garden of Gethsemane. As they travelled to biblical sites throughout the Holy Land, the church leaders from across Canada learned about mission work and current issues in Palestine and Israel. "The Mount of Olives is a favourite site for Christians from around the world to visit. The tragic thing about it, however, is tens of thousands of Christian Palestinians are unable to visit the site since they live in Palestinian territory," said Rev. Noel Gordon.

St. Andrew's, Kars, Ont.
Toys donated to the Salvation Army's Toy Mountain campaign surround Paige and Katelyn MacLellan. For the last five Christmases, the MacLellan family has invited their church to a "Toy-riffic Toyraiser Luncheon." So far they've collected a total of 600 toys and $900 in donations for families in need. (Photo by Caroline Franks of the Salvation Army.)

St. Andrew's, Lethbridge, Alta.
Members of the congregation's M.O.R.E. (Mission, Outreach & Evangelism) Team gather in front of a banner promoting the church's "Building Hope" campaign. Throughout the past year the team organized a variety of campaign events to raise support for PWS&D projects in the Shinyanga Region of Tanzania. In total the church donated more than $14,500 towards the campaign.

First, Penetanguishene, Ont.
To help celebrate 180 years of Presbyterianism in Penetanguishene, the church invited the General Assembly moderator, Rev. Dr. John Vissers, to be their guest speaker. "Our past, our present, and our future are all wrapped up in Christ's love," declared the church in a supplement to the Sunday morning bulletin. Here, Rev. Mark Wolfe and Vissers pose for a moment before heading to the legion for an anniversary banquet.

ONLINE EXTRA

ON OUR WEBSITE:
A minister is celebrated in Whitby; a former missionary is honoured in Jobat, India; and a church in Owen Sound shares nativity scenes from around the world.

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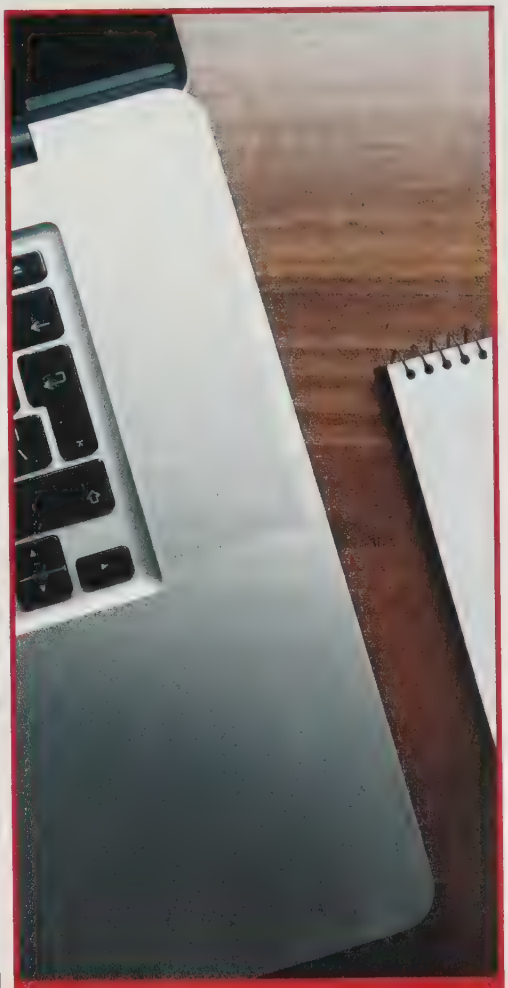

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"You have to work your spiritual body out just as much (okay maybe even a little more) than your physical one. Every day we need to set time aside to be with God so we can be full and strong for the day ahead.

This being the season of resolution, I say let this be the year that we prioritize our spiritual health."

—Becky Roushorne-Lau, From Ministry to Motherhood

PRESBYTERIAN RECORD

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Victoria, Trinity; Interim Moderator Rev. Irwin Cunningham, c/o Saanich Peninsula Presbyterian Church, 9296 East Saanich Rd., North Saanich, BC V8L 1H8; 250-656-2241; minister@saanichpeninsulapc.org.

Obituaries

Kendler, Marie, 1919-2012. On November 2, 2012, Marie went to be with her Lord. She was born in Mount Pleasant, Ont., and was a lifelong member of Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church. Marie lived and worked in Toronto and in later years retired to Brantford, Ont. ■

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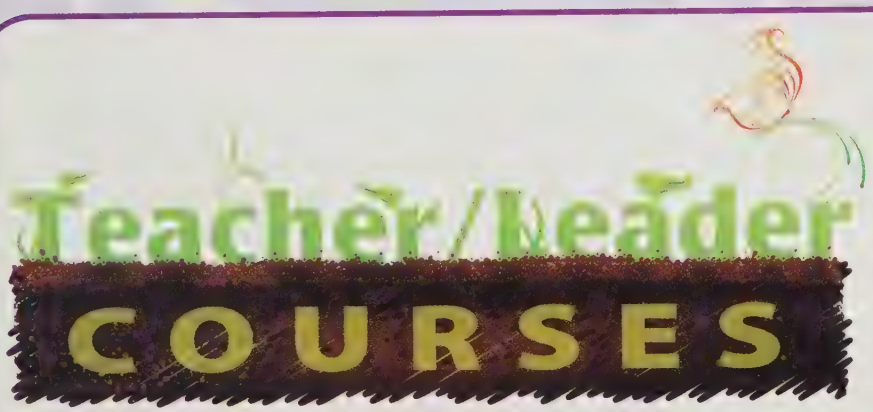

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Anatomy of All Parts of the Soul

OF PSALMS AND MARTYRS. **BY CONNIE WARDLE**

From July 6 to 22, 2012, Connie Wardle participated in a pilgrimage through countries touched by the Protestant Reformation—France, Switzerland and Scotland. This is the second of a series of reflections on the journey.

According to the elders who met us in their church in Meaux, theirs is the oldest Reformed congregation in what was, at the time of the Reformation, France.

It traces its history back to 1546. A small band of Protestants in Meaux wanted to select someone to lead them, so they sought advice in Strasbourg, then an independent city that had embraced the Reformed faith. It was where John Calvin pastored a congregation from 1538 to 1541.

The group chose a fellow named Pierre Le Clerc to be their first leader. And tragedy followed.

Only a few months later, on Oct. 7, Le Clerc and 13 others were burned at the stake as heretics. According to local legend, before they were paraded through the streets to be killed, their tongues were cut out to keep them from preaching. They could still hum Psalms, however.

Today, at the back of the sanctuary, two marble plaques flank the doors. They bear the names of the 14 martyrs burned during the congregation's founding. Above the doors, large letters declare: "*Dieu est amour.*" God is love.

A few days later, we were in Strasbourg. We sat in a small room in the Bouclier, on the site of Calvin's former church. Jackhammers rumbled in the street as we talked about the Psalms.

"There was a time when we sang nothing but Psalms in Presbyterian churches; today we sing anything but Psalms," said Rev. Dr. Roberta Clare, director of the Elders' Institute. She called them the "greatest weapon of the Reformation."

The ancient hymns were meant to be sung by the community. "In singing the Psalms together, our words become God's words. Something deeply spiritual happens," Clare said.

In churches, we shy away from many of the Psalms because they are not happy or joyful or even particularly pleasant. They give voice to anger and frustration and profound sorrow. These are not things we think belong in church services. Yet there is something very therapeutic about saying or singing sorrowful Psalms as a community, she suggested.

The church has experienced a great deal of pain throughout its history. It still does in many places. It has also caused a great deal of pain.

Meaux, France

PHOTOGRAPH BY CONNIE WARDLE

I thought back to the martyrs and their plaques and the love of God. What must it be like, I wondered, to found a church on the ashes of your brethren? To keep the faith at such a cost? To try to forgive other Christians who condemned your friends as heretics?

I could see why those heart-wrenching Psalms spoke to the reforming church. It's a powerful thing to pray words that have been prayed for millennia—words prayed by countless people before you were born, and which will be prayed by countless people long after your body has turned to dust.

"I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, 'An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul,'" Calvin wrote of the Psalms, "for there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated. ... Genuine and earnest prayer proceeds first from a sense of our need, and next, from faith in the promises of God." ■

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s senior staff writer.*

continued from page 50

Whatever the nature of my Babylon, my current hell on wheels, it must be that this was all I was expected to do. To take the next step, do the next thing, leave the arriving to God

the lake. Slowly beating his wings, he flew low over the water directly towards our place. At the last minute he adjusted his flaps slightly and gained just enough elevation to clear the roof of our house. He was so close to me when he flapped overhead that I could hear his feathers squeak.

I have been learning in my past 32 years of faith to never take an encounter with nature for granted. Like my biblical namesake, I have learned that the heavens declare God (Psalm19:1). But I have also learned to drag every encounter with nature through the word of God, for what nature has to declare is best received as illustration for the revealing word of God in scripture. And so it was that a nice bit of scripture got all tangled up in my desperate prayer and I began to mutter: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). And looking up, I think I finally got it; what it means to fly on eagles' wings.

Sprawled exhausted on our deck, it seemed to me that in some strange way I had something in common with those returning exiles that Isaiah spoke his word of God to. They too must have been sick, tired and disgusted as they faced the desert heat and what seemed like an impossibly long way back home. The truth of the matter was they were going to have to walk; not run, not fly, but walk through some of the worst desert and mountainous ground in the world as they trudged from Babylon back to Jerusalem. Running and not being weary and mounting up with eagles' wings must have seemed to be a cruel joke.

But when Eagle passed over me on the deck and I muttered Isaiah's most famous text out loud, I realized that what Isaiah said was not just a cruel metaphor that promised an eagle's flight and tireless running to the weary and discouraged. What he said was really all about walking back to Jerusalem, about trudging the whole way and how you get it done. The real promise of God in the text is walking and eventually getting there. But how does that happen?

It seemed to me as I sprawled exhausted on the deck that the two key words I muttered in response to Eagle's flyby were the words "wait" and "faint." In my mind, waiting on the Lord had to do with faith and walking and not fainting had to do with persistence.

Which brought me to the one thing it seems the person of faith is called on to do: to persistently take the next step in faith, to do the next thing. That is all the person of God in Babylon was required to do—to take the next step towards Jerusalem in persistent faith, to walk and not faint one step at a time, to relentlessly do the next thing in faith and to leave the arriving in Jerusalem up to God. Whatever the nature of my Babylon, my current hell on wheels, it must be that this was all I was expected to do. To take the next step, do the next thing, leave the arriving to God.

And so that's what I did. I broke each task in trailer repair into steps and I just focused on taking the next one. For two long weeks of long hot days I just did the next thing. And as I did that, what I experienced was a remarkable empowering shift in perspective. It was in keeping with the shift in perspective in Isaiah 40:31.

There appears to be a really interesting reverse order. Isaiah says, "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Isaiah's people lived that out in reverse. I lived that out in reverse. I took the next step. I persistently did the next thing with faith and as I did, my perspective shifted. Soon it seemed the task was doable, one step at a time. Amazingly the process became like being borne on eagles' wings as my perspective changed. And when you are really up against it, perspective seems to be just about everything.

Over and over in scripture I see this reversing of metaphor and shift in perspective. Listen to how this shift of perspective is spoken of in Exodus about the impossible escape from Egypt: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Exodus 19:4). Listen to how this shift of perspective is spoken of in Deuteronomy concerning Israel's slow 40-year slog through the wilderness of Sinai: "He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions" (Deuteronomy 32:10-12). ■

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of several books.

A Reverse Metaphor

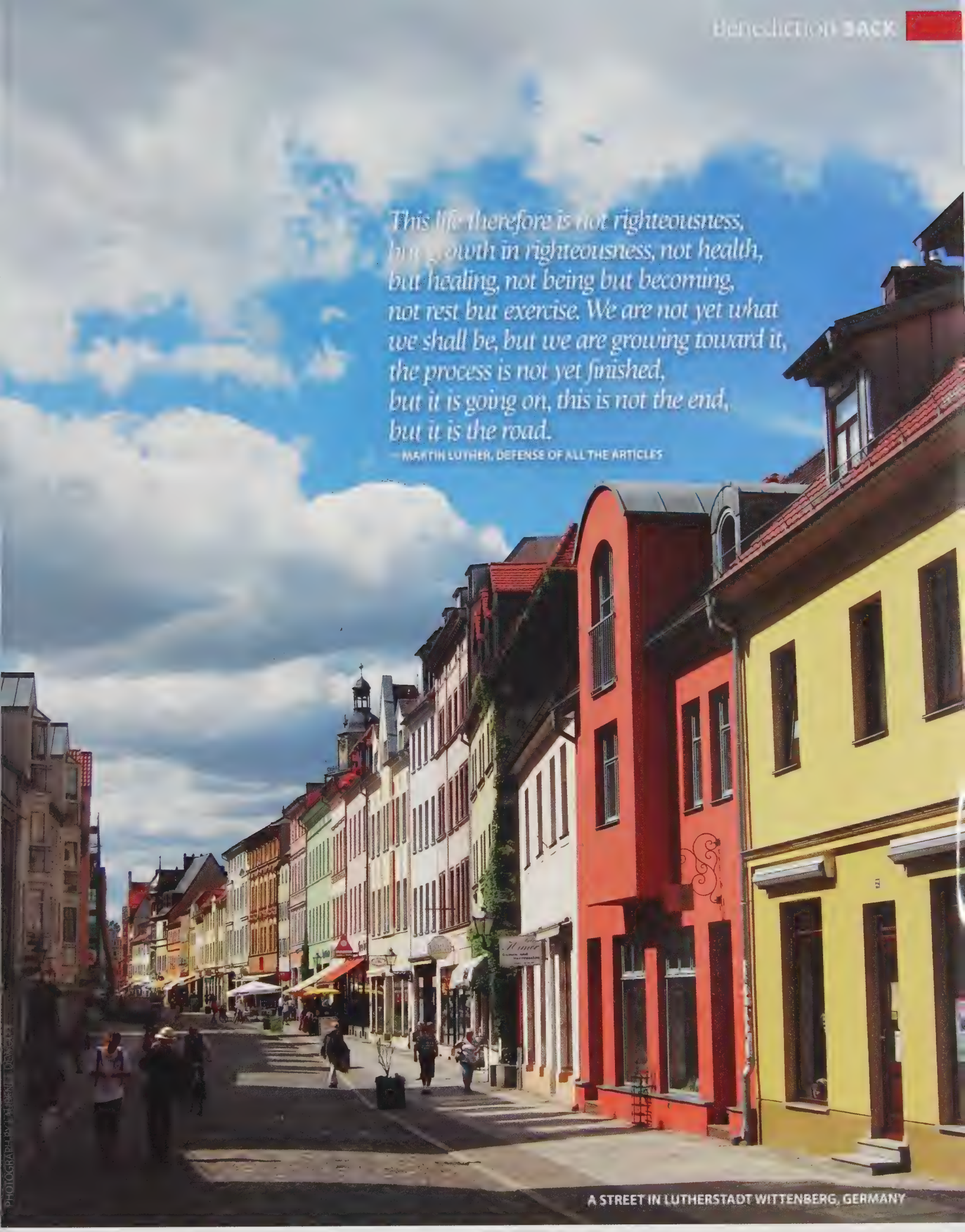
ONE STEP AT A TIME. **BY DAVID WEBBER**

ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY FALLS

It's February and I saw Eagle today. He was roosting like a half-frozen buzzard on the top of a huge spruce tree down by the lake. He had a hungry look about him. I expect calving time was heavy on his mind. Soon he would be cleaning up the calving grounds along with the ravens, crows and other carrion eaters.

It took me back to last July. Linda and I were desperate for holidays then. When they finally arrived, the first thing we had to do was repair our travel trailer. I was expecting a couple of days of work but when we got into it, dry rot in the floor and walls necessitated a major complex overhaul. The trailer was parked directly in the hot July sun and I had not been feeling well for about a month or so. The size of the task, the heat of the sun and the condition of my belly beleaguered me.

About the second day, when it became obvious that my two-day job was going to waste at least two weeks of desperately needed holiday rest, I was taking my lunch, such as it was, sprawled on the deck overlooking the lake. Sick, tired and overwhelmed, I was crying out to God. That's when Eagle lifted off of his roost on a majestic Douglas Fir across *continued on page 49*

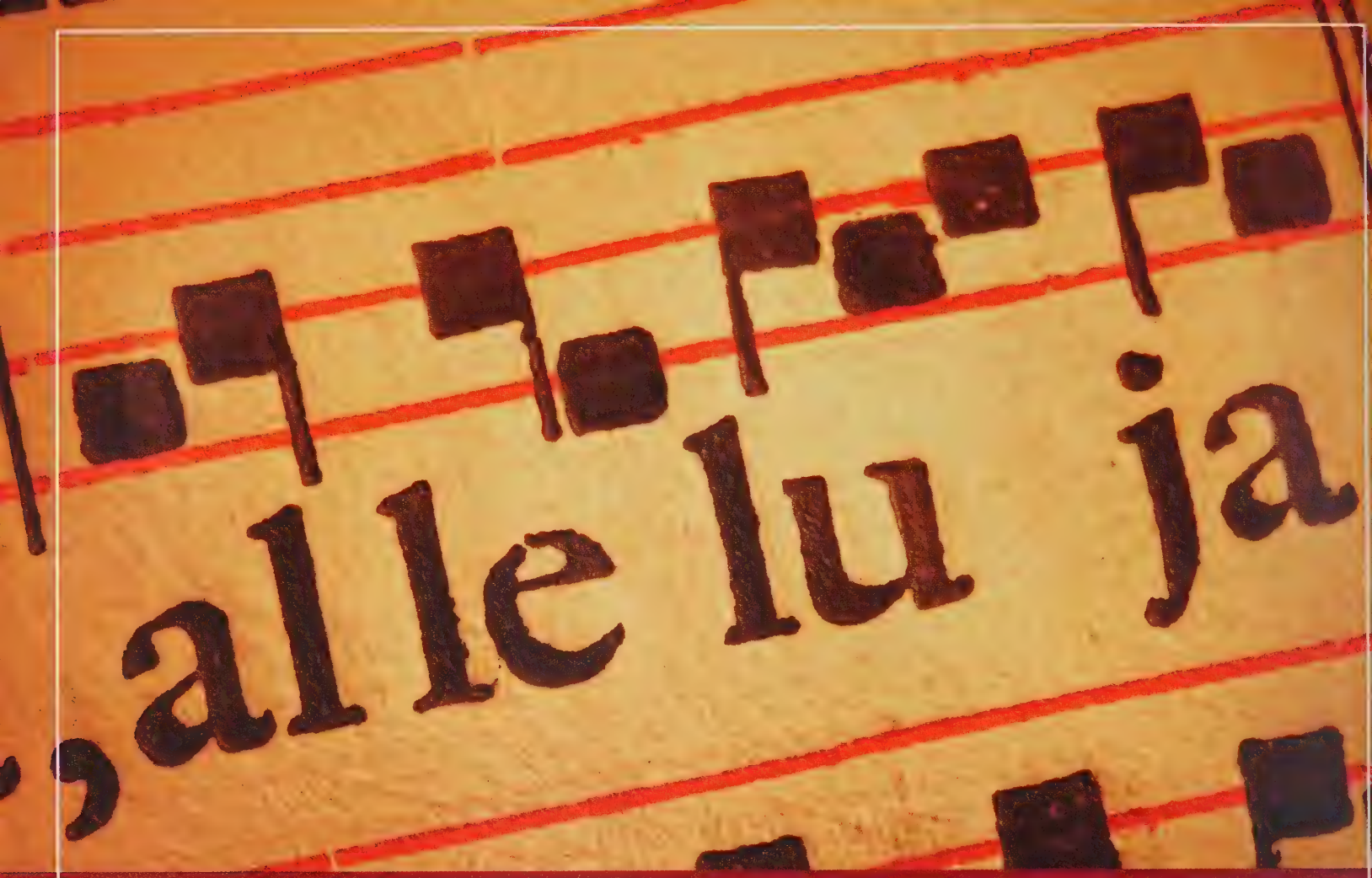


This life therefore is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health, but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it, the process is not yet finished, but it is going on, this is not the end, but it is the road.

—MARTIN LUTHER, DEFENSE OF ALL THE ARTICLES

A STREET IN LUTHERSTADT WITTENBERG, GERMANY

PHOTOGRAPH BY T. MUSSKE / DEVOSCO



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—Matthew Ruttan

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Receptive to the Word

THINKING ABOUT THE CHURCH IN THE CITY.

Last summer the *Record's* intern Helen Pye, from England, did some interviews for her feature article in this issue on the challenges facing the urban church. Full transcripts of the interviews can be found online, and the one with Rev. Dr. Rick Fee is included in these pages.

Read together, the interviews are a dynamic dialogue on the future of the church. We present a few excerpts here to get you thinking about what church can be in the city and beyond in the coming years.

> The best case scenario is that people see the church or the congregation as a community based on love and inclusion and acceptance and would feel welcome to join and would want to be a part of that community

We've gone beyond the day where we build a building and people will come. Church buildings don't necessarily attract and increasingly I find congregations are saying it's when we go out of the building that we are church. You only have to go to a patio for lunch in Toronto to recognize there's a whole new world out there in an urban setting in Canada. Go to a sports arena on Sunday morning at 11 o'clock, that's where people are.
—Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, general secretary, Life and Mission Agency

I think there is another way of doing ministry that some congregations could take on. It requires a certain kind of leadership that has a vision for urban communities and for Christian work that does not repeat the mistakes of the church in the past. The church has been involved in mission in very negative ways and at this moment it's going through its post-aboriginal mission experiences and apologies. When I say the church I'm first talking about structures: the presbyteries, the General Assemblies, then I'm talking about church as the congregations.
—Rev. Paulette Brown, executive director, Flemingdon Gateway Mission, Toronto

Members of the congregation have become very isolated from the community around the church because they don't live here anymore. They probably drive past many churches to get here. So, while the church is still a reflection of what they found valuable and meaningful 40 or 50 years ago, the neighbourhood doesn't look the same. It isn't like them; it isn't interested in what they're doing; it doesn't come to their events and doesn't have any idea of what goes on inside these walls. So the community has this benign neglect of whatever goes on behind the walls of that building on the corner and the congregation has a suspicious, vaguely hostile reaction to the community.
—Rev. Douglas duCharme, minister, Hope United, Toronto

The main scripture used to be Matthew 28; go make disciples of all nations, that was our evangelism verse. Now Luke 10 has become the new text for the missional church; go out as lambs among wolves, go out without money. Luke 10 has us being sent out to places where we find people receptive to the Word and then we plant there and set up places for them to worship. Another passage is Jeremiah 29, where the exiles are living in Babylon and the advice to them is to build homes, etc., and basically pray for the flourishing of the city where you are and establish a community there.
—Rev. Glen Soderholm, minister, Two Rivers Church, Guelph, Ont.

If you'd come to St. Andrew's King Street yesterday morning, we had a community breakfast for about 140. We have a group of volunteers from the congregation and outside who come at about six a.m. and make breakfast. It's a very different crowd who come to Bible study on Wednesday. They come for a whole variety of reasons and represent a different part of the community that lives in the downtown core. The best case scenario is that people see the church or the congregation as a community based on love and inclusion and acceptance and would feel welcome to join and would want to be a part of that community. A lot of volunteers find this their way of being a compassionate person.
—Rev. Dr. Bob Faris, associate minister, St. Andrew's King Street, Toronto ■

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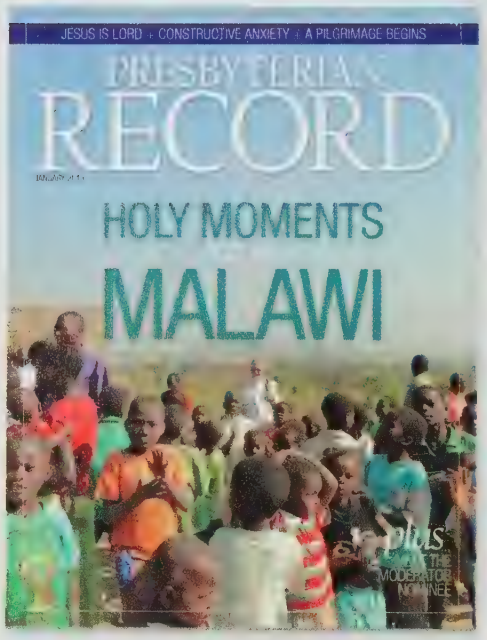

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The Holiest Object

Re Be Church, January

This reminded me of something C.S. Lewis said in a sermon called The Weight of Glory in 1942: "Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian neighbour he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also Christ *vere latitat*, the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden."

MATTHEW RUTTAN, ONLINE COMMENT

I like the collection of writing that you have collected in the Be Church blog online. It's all part of the enlargement of our spiritual vision, isn't it? Thanks for the concrete reminder that worship is far more than pew-based.

And Matthew, that's a powerful quotation. Thanks for sharing it here.

KATIE MUNNICK, ONLINE COMMENT

Biblical Promise

Re Foster Dialogue, December Letters

Thank you Sandra Demson for your rebuttal to this disturbing article. How can anyone begrudge millions of Jewish people their own homeland? Israel is a mere sliver in a massive land area of hundreds of millions of Arabs. But is this a fight for the little, rocky, country of Israel, or about some Arabs hating Jews just slightly more than they hate each other, as is evident in Syria, Egypt, etc.? Politics and opinions aside, I still pray to God for peace in the Middle East for all concerned, even though wars and rumours of wars are biblically promised.

ALISON MACLEAN, KAMLOOPS, B.C.

Much Needed Reformation

The January issue really thrills me. It includes a great variety of ➤

positive ideas for our denomination to consider and includes some of our problems. It could well become the basis for a much needed reformation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. These articles all together in one issue appear to me just too good to be true! All of them provide valuable contributions to such an end.

To begin with, David Harris clearly describes the sad state of our current decline without excuses or denial!

Andrew Faiz describes his recent positive experience at Evergreen Centre of the Yonge Street Mission where relevant means of hope for youth are successfully applied. I like his suggestion of extending our idea of sacrament to include such personal engagement and pastoral care of the troubled young people we may encounter, instead of looking the other way.

Then there is Diana Butler Bass and her book *Christianity Beyond Religion*. The title suggests a basic problem with many mainline congregations and their pastors, when the latter is equated with the former.

Tony Campolo (also in the issue), through his sermons and books, is very inspirational and relevant, presenting the good news Jesus brought to the world with the Spirit of tolerance, love and humour. For example, he draws a clear line between evangelicals and fundamentalists. The former are much more likely to focus on the scriptural words and example of Jesus, the latter tend to be more legalistic, judgmental and divisive. He quotes Gandhi, saying everyone knows what Jesus taught except Christians, and asserts that "the church should be the only club in the world that exists for the benefit of its non-members." My wife and I have met and heard him speak many times at the annual nine-week summer Chautauqua Institution.

Jeff Loach's article, Saviour and Lord, continues in the same vein as he explains the meaning of the word "atone," quoting from our recent doctrinal standard, *Living Faith*.

The scriptural words highlighted by Laurence DeWolfe, "the joy of the Lord is your strength," continue the same positive note.

Fred Stewart reports that the fourfold focus of the Renewal

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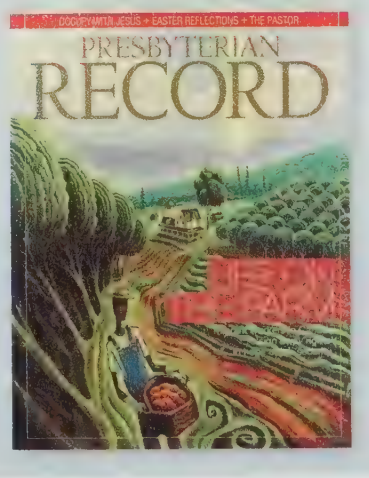

A community of compassion
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2013 is a special year for Evangel Hall Mission, as we celebrate 100 years of service in the Queen and Bathurst community.

The talented staff at the Toronto design agency, Haft 2, have generously designed a special commemorative book that explores our history.

This beautiful 8 x 8 book contains a collection of new and historical photos as well as personal stories from those whom ehm has touched the most, from volunteers, donors and beneficiaries.

We want to share our history with all of our supporters and hope you will purchase this commemorative piece in honor of all those we have served throughout the years. They are only $50 per copy.

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Fellowship is prayer, community, encouragement and dependence on God. Perhaps it is because these are so basic to a living, growing church that they are taken for granted and ignored.

An appropriate end to this review is the wonderfully illustrated and documented mission of the church in Malawi. Included are observations by John Vissers. As he reports, "The average Christian today is more likely to be a poor mother in Malawi or Latin America than a middle-class professional in Canada." Yet, he says, their church is growing numerically and spiritually, engaged in evangelism and social action. People are coming to a personal faith in Jesus Christ at the same time as they are being housed, fed and cared for. With these qualities they are much like the first generation Christian congregations as pictured in Acts 2.

WALLY WHYTE, TORONTO

Re Want Young People in Your Church?, November

Fifty-six years ago, I too was a member of PYPS. During an experience at Kintail Camp, I took some film. In the fall of 2012, that film was digitized and now is posted on YouTube (and the *Record*'s Facebook page) under the title "Kintal Camp 1956 PYPS." Readers might be interested in how some things have changed and how some things remain the same over the years.

LEX MCCRINDLE, VIA EMAIL

Enabling Leaders

Re: Constructive Anxiety, January

The editorial rightly notes that there are profound changes occurring in institutional Christianity in the West, and it encourages us all to listen for the Holy Spirit's call to new directions to be more faithful to God. While many writers about organizational behaviour would disagree with the editor that anxiety can ever be a "good" tool to spur and sustain such change within an organization (similar to using fear to motivate Christian discipleship), the general point is correct: We in the PCC should welcome the opportunity to find effective ways to be a faithful, missional church that may lead to radically different attitudes and actions.

At St. Andrew's Hall, the sole PCC theological college in Western Canada, we have been excited to develop over the past several years a vision and the resources for effective Christian leadership in a post-Christendom culture. While drawing approximately only five per cent of its budget from national PCC funding, St. Andrew's Hall has been busy developing the financial, intellectual, organizational and spiritual muscle to launch a new way to equip ministers and other future leaders within and beyond the denomination. Just as Paul explained in 1 Corinthians that the one Holy Spirit distributes many different gifts to many different people, we at St. Andrew's Hall after much consideration are convinced that limiting theological education to one institution denies the many gifts different groups and schools will bring to the future church. We are honoured to participate with many others in the denomination in educating and enabling leaders who seek and follow God's will in the coming generations.

DAVID JENNINGS
CONVENER, BOARD OF ST. ANDREW'S HALL, VANCOUVER, B.C.

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Let the conversation continue.
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Serving Hospitality

BEING CHURCH AT ST. ANDREW'S, SUTTON. **BY ANDREW FAIZ**

It would have been easier if St. Andrew's, Sutton, Ont., had done nothing. A few dozen people were worshipping on Sunday mornings with all the now ubiquitous demographics and dynamics at play, with an aging populous and hard-set habits. But then they went and did it, they looked into their hearts, they discerned the Spirit at work in their community, and they decided to launch a mission.

Those hairline fractures in the congregational community (what congregation doesn't have them?) widened and deepened. There was bitterness that hasn't healed yet and St. Andrew's found itself with less than 20 on a Sunday morning and no minister. (I don't want to suggest the mission was the source of these separations but it did become a focal point.) But they had as many as 80 on a Tuesday night.

For eight years now St. Andrew's has been hosting a Tuesday community dinner in the church basement. It costs more money—but not a lot more, they run it on a separate budget from congregational expenses. It takes a great deal of effort—but they've fine-tuned the process, so when I visited on a January evening, I witnessed a well-oiled machine, which kept the warmth of community without the drama of serving a multitude. And it is infectious—not only has the Tuesday night dinner transformed the lives of the church members but also the lives of those they serve and the community at large. The nearby Anglican, Nazarene and United churches, as well as another Presbyterian church, take turns preparing and serving the hot meal.

For those who come to eat, Tuesday nights have become sacramental.

...not only has the Tuesday night dinner transformed the lives of the church members but also the lives of those they serve and the community at large

That's a big word, I know, but I'll stick with it; the lonely seniors, the mentally handicapped, the struggling-working, the edges-of-polite-society who come for the meal also come for the fellowship. Tuesday night is now an opportunity to be served hospitality. That's sacrament.

The man beside me, a jolly fellow, told me, "I used to be a nasty person; all I did was drink." The after-effects of an alcoholic's life were evident in his speech, but there he was in a church being served. At another table a woman who had just gone through some medical procedure could tell her story. Community as a balm to loneliness.

I won't name any of the Sutton folk here, because I'll invariably leave out too many. Suffice it to say, the evening is about the church community. It begins with a hymn sing, a raucous guitar leading the way. Then a brief meditation, followed by the meal. It is worship. But it's on a Tuesday night, in the basement, including some people who would never walk into a sanctuary on a Sunday morning. And it is also transformative for all involved; those few St. Andrew's members I spoke with may not have a rich theological language, but they could speak about the spiritual change in their own lives.

So much so, last November they opened a food pantry. Everything is donated one way or another; it requires more work and more effort, driving around picking up donated items. But, I suppose, it ain't work when you're serving in the name of Christ.

The community dinner has changed St. Andrew's and Sutton, Ont., in many ways but one. The church is still aging and financially struggling. They don't cross 20 on a Sunday morning, with a student minister from Knox College leading worship. So, perhaps it would have been easier if they'd done nothing; they'd still be a few on Sunday morning. But then they wouldn't be able to count the 80 broken souls who break bread on Tuesday nights, the neighbouring churches who participate, the many others who participate distantly through donations as extended members of their congregation. ■

Andrew Faiz is the Record*'s managing editor. You can view a slide presentation on St. Andrew's, Sutton, online.*

The Future of Theological Colleges

THE HEADS OF THE THREE COLLEGES SHARE THEIR VISION FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE PCC.

LAST MONTH, Rev. Dr. John Vissers wrote in his moderatorial column about the future of the Presbyterian Church's theological colleges. The *Record* invited the heads of the three colleges to share their thoughts on the future of theological education in our denomination.

MINISTERS OF MISSION

By Stephen Farris, Dean, St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver

It is indeed time for the denomination to ask what its theological colleges have been discerning for the past several years: what kind of leaders will be needed in the almost unimaginably different church of the future? How can those leaders be best prepared?

The question has emerged because we as a denomination are also asking: "How much can we afford?" We know good leadership will not come cheaply but poor leadership will be more costly still. My colleague John Vissers in his excellent article uses a phrase first coined by me regarding a description of ministers as those of mission, maintenance or mischief. It came to me when I was sitting on yet another committee trying to clean up the congregational mess caused by a minister of mischief. I realized that the cost of the denomination's annual grant for theological education was far less than what this and other ministers of mischief cost the denomination with countless person-hours in congregations and higher courts dealing with antagonism, division, heartache and tears, severance packages and closed congregations. That, we cannot afford.

Colleges need to help ministers of maintenance, the ones who know how to keep a congregation ticking along, become ministers of mission. Ministers of mission can perceive God-given possibilities for a congregation and can inspire people to share and act on a vision. Above all, ministers of mission can speak winningly of the gracious God made known in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the mandate of all our colleges.

I was mildly unwell recently and stayed home on a Sunday morning. I had a cup of coffee, read the paper, watched the more athletically inclined run in the park. It was a wonderful time. Why should the people who do that every Sunday bother to go to church? For the music, programs or fellowship? Probably not. They will only come to a congregation with leaders who can winsomely show those people the God-shaped hole in their lives and invite them to a mature worshipping community. That will not happen in any sustained manner without ministers of spiritual depth with wise leadership skills. Effective ministry is not just a matter of technique. It is also a matter of the spiritual maturity that is nurtured by an excellent and relevant theological education. The real question the denomination must ask in these days of culture's increasing abandonment of Christian discipleship is: "Can we afford anything other than excellent theological education?"

> Different people in different places will propose different solutions to the challenges we face. Variety is a gift of God

This is not to say that theological education won't change. It can and must change. But good education can't be obtained on the cheap.

At St. Andrew's Hall in Vancouver we have been holding consultations about effective leadership for the future church. Our commitment to discovering, enabling and sustaining those gifted by God to be the best potential leaders and laying the challenge of ministry is better

informed, resourced, and stronger than ever.

The moderator suggests that "one big college" in one or more sites could be the right path forward. We disagree, and not just because desired financial savings are largely illusory. Would the computer industry be better for having only Microsoft and no Apple? How would an ice cream stand fare that sells only vanilla? Different people in different places will propose different solutions to the challenges we face. Variety is a gift of God.

St. Andrew's Hall welcomes the denomination's engagement as we all discern how we can help provide to the church the best leaders for a complex future.

> People will only come to a congregation with leaders who can winsomely show them the God-shaped hole in their lives and invite them to a mature worshipping community. That will not happen in any sustained manner without ministers of spiritual depth with wise leadership skills

WISE STEWARDSHIP

By Dorcas Gordon, Principal, Knox College, Toronto

The issue of theological education is a question that needs to be raised but, given its genesis, I would worry that we emphasize the last phrase of the Assembly Council recommendation rather than the middle phrase. In other words in preparing leaders for the PCC, what is "wise stewardship" in allocating the resources that God gives us? So often the preparation of leadership for the denomination, whether lay or ordained, is something we take for granted. Perhaps that is a good sign indicating that in many congregations there is only thankfulness for the devotion and skill that leaders bring to their calling.

Certainly I agree with Dr. Vissers that there is no better time than now to consider the way in which we educate and equip leaders. My experience is, for most of my almost 14 years as principal at Knox, this is happening on a regular basis. Those of us appointed as principals and dean by the General Assembly, in collaboration with our boards also appointed by the assembly, have such discussions at almost every meeting. Debates sharing wisdom about preparing future leaders, about programs for theological education and about stewardship of the church's resources are ongoing. Perhaps what Vissers means is that this discussion and debate needs to be expanded.

More troubling for me is that, having read and re-read his column, I realize that I don't really know where Assembly Council's primary motivation lies: is it a concern for excellent leadership for the church in secular post-Christian Canada or is it about cost-cutting? My hope is that it is the former but my fear is that it is the latter. Whatever it is, much is riding on the answer.

TO SERVE THE CHURCH

By Dale Woods, Interim Principal, Presbyterian College, Montreal

Dr. Vissers's article, as I understand it, is a rallying call to think deeply about the kind of leaders the PCC will need today and into the future. He reminds us that theological education is the responsibility of the whole church. Unless all of us take our responsibilities seriously we will not have the type of leaders we need.

As noted in the article, theological education is ultimately about the mission of God and the church's vision for the future. Before we can make serious and discerning decisions about the future of theological education we need to ask: "What is our vision of the Presbyterian Church?" It is only when we have a clear vision of our calling as a church that we can really answer the question, "How can our colleges best serve that vision?"

As in any important discussion, there are various options or directions we can take as a denomination. It will take conversation, collaboration, clarity and a great deal of commitment. In an age of change, diversity and geographical differences, it seems to me that using and developing the strengths of each college to offer something unique and necessary for the future of the church would be a helpful direction. In my view, the larger the institutional nature, the slower the pace of change is likely to be.

Presbyterian College has been working on a strategic plan with a focus on equipping leaders for starting new worshipping communities as well as congregational renewal. It has a vision for developing leaders within its unique context within Quebec. And it has a vision for a leadership institute that could be in partnership with the other colleges and serve the needs of the wider church.

These are challenging days for the church. However, with challenges come new opportunities. Leadership is key and the questions Dr. Vissers raises are questions with which we all need to wrestle. ■

Community News

John Whiteway and June Thompson are two of the Friends of Historic Kildonan Church, a group dedicated to restoring the Presbyterian church built by the Selkirk settlers back in 1854.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK HALSALL, THE HERALD, WINNIPEG

Restoring Oldest PCC Church in Western Canada

CLOSED FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, Old Kildonan Presbyterian Church, the oldest stone church in Winnipeg, will once again be open to the community.

After two town hall meetings last spring confirmed community support for the project, a citizen group was formed to help the restoration process.

Since then, the Friends of Historic Kildonan Church have secured private and public grants to begin restoring the church building.

A study completed in November will help the church and community decide how to make the heritage site self-sustaining. Renovations are expected to begin in the spring.

"The historical significance is phenomenal," said June Thompson, chairperson of the Friends of Historic Kildonan Church and a former English and history teacher. "It has to be maintained for future generations."

Selkirk settlers, who immigrated to Red River, Man., from Scotland in the wake of the Highland Clearances in the early 1800s, built the church in 1854.

The congregation worshipped there until 1988, when they moved to Kildonan Community Church, which is located on the same property. ■

—Seth Veenstra

Elder and Ecumenist Passes Away

JOHN MACFARLANE WAS an elder, a talented treasurer, and a strong believer in ecumenism. He passed away on Jan. 29 at the age of 96.

For more than two decades, MacFarlane worked with the Caribbean and North American Area Council, which at the time was a regional body of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. From 1984 to 2002, he was the group's treasurer.

"His sense of vision for CANAAC and WARC in those days was remarkable," wrote Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the organization that succeeded WARC in 2010. "Among other things he was an ardent advocate for ensuring that the contributions of Caribbean churches were not judged simply on the basis of their financial contributions. Each church, no matter what their financial standing, was valued for all the ways in which they contributed."

CANAAC represents 20 WCRC member churches in the Caribbean, the United States and Canada. The WCRC boasts a total membership of 230 churches in 108 countries.

At home in Ottawa, MacFarlane was elected elder at St. Andrew's in

1958. He sang in the choir for more than six decades, convened the worship committee, was a representative elder to presbytery for 36 years, and in 1995 he became presbytery moderator. For a time, he also chaired the finance committee of the Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario.

"John knew every dimension of this particular congregation, but allowed himself to be grown into a vision of the larger Church of Christ," said Rev. Dr. Andrew Johnston, minister of St. Andrew's. "John lived with the strength of knowing that his life was a gift of God, in which he could serve God in work and worship and world, and that this life is but the beginning by the promises of God."

His family, friends and church celebrated his life with a funeral service on Feb. 2. ■ —*Connie Wardle*

Vancouver Church Plans Condo Development

IN DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER, the congregation of Central Presbyterian plans to replace the church building with a 21-story condo tower. And they plan to stay.

"We're a typical church: land rich and cash poor; a small congregation sitting on $10 million dollars worth of property," said Rev. Jim Smith, minister at Central.

Central's building is used by two other congregations: Christ Alive, a community church, and Galilee Korean Presbyterian, as well as Montessori and karate schools, a daycare and a number of community groups.

"Currently, the building is in use from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. We're out of time and space," said Smith.

Rather than sell the property to a developer and move, Smith said Central decided to leverage the value of the land into a new facility.

"What the development will give us is a church building that is about a third larger than what we have right now and a space that will also be much more usable," said Smith.

It will also give them the chance to offer affordable housing to local residents—a dream they've had for a number of years, said Smith.

"We see a need for more affordable options," reads a statement the church gave at a community presentation. "We want to provide a housing program that offers a mix of affordable housing options through a Central nonprofit housing society."

To fund the project, a fifth of the space will be sold as market value condos. The remaining apartments will become affordable housing, available at either 75 or 50 per cent of the standard rental rate. A property management group will oversee both types of housing on the church's behalf.

"So it isn't costing us anything to do this. We get the church portion, which includes some retail space, the 45 apartments and a share of the parking—and no mortgage," said Smith.

There was, however, the initial cost of the proposal. With the help of the synod and Canadian Ministries, Central was able to raise $30,000 to hire an architecture firm.

"We're plowing new ground here. We're trying to find a 21st century vision inspired by the pioneer communities. Back in those days the first building in a new community was the church; but it was also a courthouse, community centre, school, a place for meetings, and place of refuge. Our congregation understands that the foundational question the gospel presents us is, 'does the church exist to serve its members, or are the members there to serve the community in Christ's name?' For us, it's not about preserving our culture; it's about rolling up sleeves and serving our community. And that's an attitude that's absolutely vital for the life of the church." ■ —*SV*

Texas Church 'Buys Back' Guns

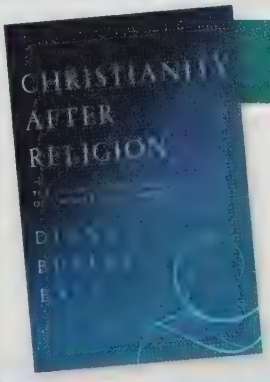
WHILE THEY AREN'T BEATING swords into ploughshares, First Presbyterian, Dallas, is grinding pistols and semi-automatics into recyclable metal.

For more than a decade the church has hosted Gun Buy Back events, where they purchase community members' firearms and then destroy them.

"We see it as a reflection of our community ministry," organizer Rev. Bruce Buchanan told the *Dallas Morning News*. "We're providing an opportunity for people to make their homes safer."

This year's event happened a month after 20 children and six adults were shot in Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

The church event was countered by gun enthusiasts who held a firearms auction in the empty lot across the street, offering more money for each gun. The church offered $50 for handguns and up to $200 for semi-automatic weapons. It bought and destroyed 100 guns. ■ —*with files from the Dallas Morning News*



The Synod of the Atlantic Provinces is hosting a Continuing Education Event featuring,

Diana Butler Bass who will be speaking on the topic,
Christianity after Religion: the 3Bs of Faith: Belief, Behaviour, and Belonging

Sept. 27-29, 2013
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
Moncton, New Brunswick

For further information and registration go to **www.pccatlantic.ca**

Awareness and Hope

GETTING OUT OF THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION.

I will not go into depth with the history of the residential school legacy and colonization, but I will say that many aboriginal people today who are struggling with substance abuse, family violence, prostitution, the inability to parent and show affection, all originate from these historical facts. I personally believe it is extremely important to understand not only the addiction side of what society sees, but to also get to know the human being and what got them to the state they are in. What was their life like, what are their experiences, why is their spirit broken and what is the addiction doing to them on the inside and on the outside with respect to their mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being?

I am not an addictions counsellor or psychologist of any kind, but I am on my own healing journey from addictions. I can share some information based on my personal experience with addictions and how it has affected my life. I can honestly tell you there are no pros to addiction, only cons and consequences.

> I received very little affection from my mother growing up; I was raised in an alcoholic environment with abuse and violence and that's what I knew. I completely abandoned every part of myself as a direct result of my early childhood

First of all, addiction is a word used to describe what the actual substance does to people who suffer from it. The substance can be drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, shopping, working, cutting or sniffing solvents. Anything that a person uses to change how they feel is a substance and if that substance begins to control their lives then it becomes an addiction. People who are addicted to something are usually suppressing some form of childhood trauma, neglect, or are just a product of the cycle of substance abuse itself.

In my experience with addictions, I used drugs and alcohol to run away from my feelings, to identify with others, and to feel acceptance. I received very little affection from my mother growing up; I was raised in an alcoholic environment with abuse and violence and that's what I knew. I completely abandoned every part of myself as a direct result of my early childhood. So in my adult years, I did not feel understood or accepted and became rebellious towards any authority figure and society as a whole.

All those years of being judged and cast out, no one knew that inside I was dying and crying to be heard and even rescued. But no matter how lonely and disconnected I felt inside, it was more comfortable to just keep abusing the substances and dealing with the

169TH CONVOCATION
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Convocation Address by

The Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls
'The Bible Tells Me So' and other Ethics for Interpreters

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Principal's Reunion Year Dinner: Tuesday, May 7th
For Knox/Ewart Grads of 1973, 1963, 1953 & prior

KEGA Grad Luncheon: Wednesday, May 8th
For Knox/Ewart Grads of 2003, 1988, 1973, 1963, 1953 & prior

For more information and to register, please contact:

Marie Ainey • Communications Associate • Knox College
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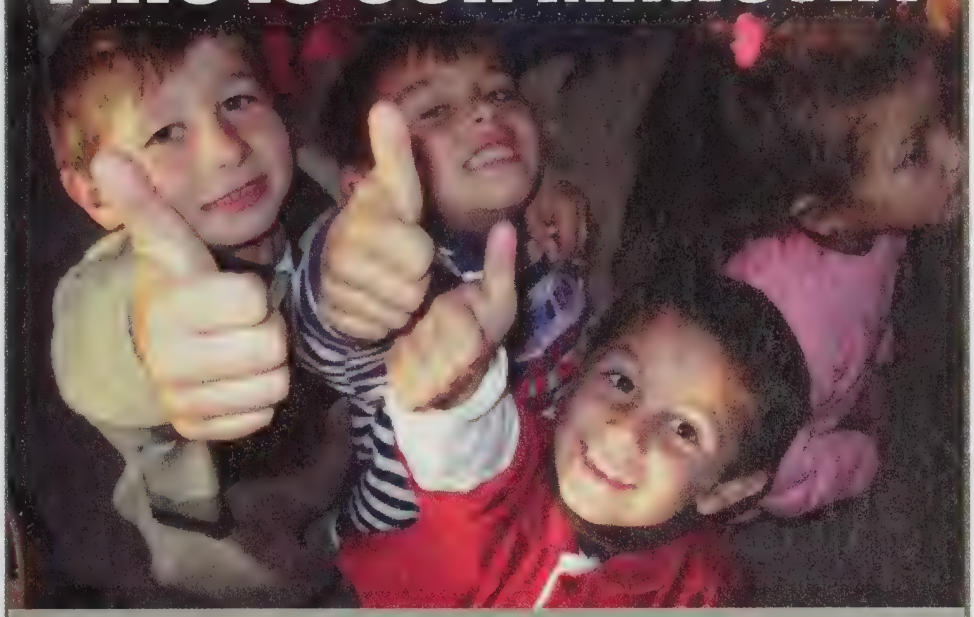
consequences. I reached a bottom where I didn't even feel human anymore; I was completely physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually destroyed and only then was I willing to take a stand to break that cycle!

The journey I am on today is a gift. I am learning to rebuild my spirit; I am being restored to a state that I have never experienced in my life. I am becoming capable of achieving my dreams. Today I am discovering myself all over again as if I am a child and I don't have to accept how others judge me. I am learning about my culture and Métis heritage and I have the ability to share my experience and knowledge with my grandkids so that they can have a chance at a different life than I had.

I still struggle with some things like extreme shyness, and self-confidence but it's getting better. I know that I don't have to settle for how society sees me. I can love and accept who I am because I am learning who I am today, which helps me to be more empathetic to others who are out there suffering from their addictions but haven't found themselves yet. Spirits can be reclaimed and traditions can be restored. It's through awareness that hope can be shared with the still suffering aboriginal people with addictions who need empathy and understanding, not judgment and condemnation. ■

This was written by a woman at Anishinabe Fellowship Centre, a part of Winnipeg Inner City Missions. To learn more visit: wicm.ca/fellowship.html

THIS IS OUR MINISTRY



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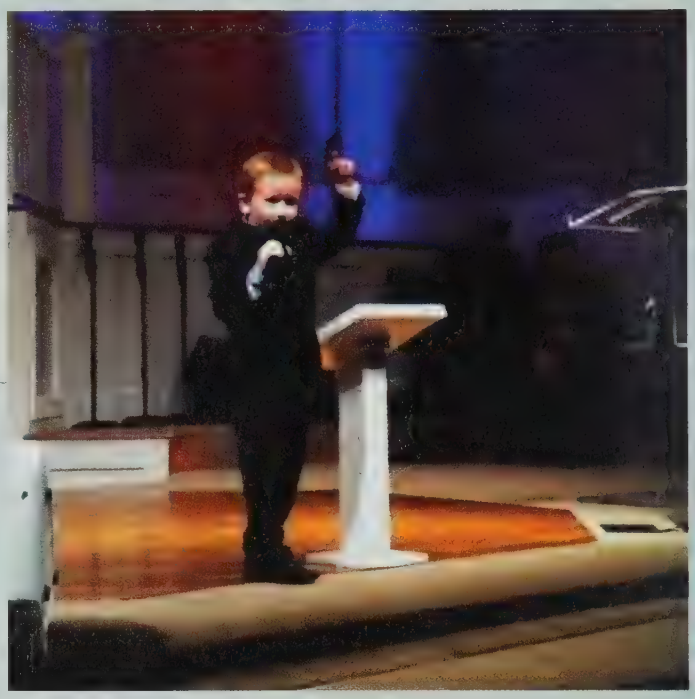
WITH VIDEOS AND SUCH. **BY BRAD CHILDS**



Kanon Tipton

EDUCATION

Crash Course is the brainchild of the "VlogBrothers" (John and Hank Green). It is a clever little animated series found on its own YouTube channel. It teaches big topics in a way that's simplified for the general public. Oh yeah, and they're entertaining, too. Crash Course has a large number of 15-minute lessons on everything from ecology to American history to biology. What's of particular interest to me is Crash Course World History #11: Christianity from Judaism to Constantine. While it's done from a secular perspective, it's still fair and it's pretty good. It's worth sharing and quite frankly a lot of good could come from it.

FIND IT @ **Search YouTube for Crash Course World History 11 or visit the channel at youtube.com/user/crashcourse**

FONTS

It's not for everyone, but a few of you might actually be thankful for this. (I'm thinking especially of you Hebrew students.) As any student of biblical languages knows, incorporating biblical lettering into your work is often a pain. With Hebrew, which is written right to left, this is especially true. However, there is a solution. Thank you, Unicode. You can download both Greek and Hebrew fonts for word processors for free through the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

FIND IT @ **sil.org in the Fonts and Writing Systems section.**

"CHRISTIAN" JOKES

ChristWire is a satire site. The many authors use inaccurate reports, made up stories, and much more to parody Christian conservatives and what the authors see as fundamentalist Christian fears. ChristWire first came to notoriety when the Huffington Post picked up on one of their stories, titled "Is My Husband Gay?" believing it to be a serious article. As the good folks at ChristWire pretend to be conservative Christians, it does stand to reason that some might miss the fact that it's satire. Still, perhaps the fact checkers at the Huffington Post should have read a few more articles in their investigation. For further reading, might I suggest the article titled "God Creates 12/12/12 to Let us Know Obama is Twice as Bad (2 X 666)."

FIND IT @ **christwire.org**

PREACH IT BABY (PART DEUX)

Kanon Tipton first gained some fame when he climbed up to the pulpit at the age of 21 months and preached his first "sermon." Now it's worth noting that Kanon's father is the preacher at a Pentecostal church in Mississippi and that the only intelligible words Kanon says in that first video are "in Jesus's name" but it's still quite an interesting clip. Well, well, well, it seems little Kanon is now four years old and he's still at it. Recently a new set of videos have been trending around the old interwebs featuring the pint-sized Pentecostal. While Kanon can't be scheduled to preach he does simply walk up to the pulpit when he feels inspired by the Spirit with a specific message and is seen as a true blessing to the church. He runs and jumps and yells and even flips through books of some sort—and according to his father, Kanon occasionally "says something that has substance" and when he does he "captures the audience."

FIND IT @ **youtube.com/user/devonntipton**

Rev. Brad Childs is minister at First, Regina.

Theology 101

PHOTOGRAPH BY ISTOCK PHOTO

OUR FEATURE ON LIVING FAITH

Living Faith is a declaration of faith of the Presbyterian Church. You can download it at presbyterian.ca. We suggest you read the passage being discussed each month.

ADDITIONAL READING: The Forgotten God (June 2009) and Spiritual Presence (September 2010). The articles can be found at presbyterianrecord.ca.

God and the Holy Spirit

A PERSON WITHIN THE ETERNAL COMMUNION.

BY GERARD BOOY

LIVING FAITH 4 (GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT)

Living Faith left me deeply under the impression that our entire Christian journey depends on the presence and work of God the Holy Spirit. We don't always think in these terms, but consider this: Would we be who we are in Christ unless the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ and transforms our lives? Would we have faith? Would any of the things we say and do in Christ's name be possible without the work of the Holy Spirit? Would there be a church unless the Spirit enables people to believe and binds them together in Christ?

It is safe to say, no. Without the witness of the Spirit there would be no knowledge of the truth, no repentance of sins, no faith in Christ and therefore no hope, and no witnessing ➤

The Spirit gives new life to the church. *Living Faith* adds a second line to the traditional wording of the Nicene Creed in calling the Spirit the renewer and helper of God's people

to Christ. We would not be in Christ. John Calvin reminds us that "as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us."

I emphasize this because we tend to be quite casual when it comes to the Holy Spirit. It is not that we don't believe in the Holy Spirit; we do, but we generally tend to pay less attention to the Spirit than to other aspects of our doctrine and church life. We can even be a little sceptical about people and churches that put more emphasis on the Spirit and experiences of the Spirit.

Since our Christian life is pilgrimage that begins, continues and ends in God, we would do well to be more attentive to the Spirit.

What do we believe about the Holy Spirit?

The first thing we are reminded of is that the Holy Spirit is God. This is imperative. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the triune God, One with the Father and the Son. You may think that I am stating the obvious, but it is not as self-evident as it may seem. It is not uncommon for us to think of the Spirit as merely a characteristic of God, or as an impersonal force that we can harness and manipulate as we choose. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal power at our disposal. The Spirit is a person within the eternal communion of the Trinity. We relate to the Spirit in the same way as we relate to the Father and the Son. We worship and glorify the Spirit with the Father and the Son.

It is against this background that we read the next line. *Living Faith* follows the wording of the Nicene Creed in saying that the Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life. This opens up a vast biblical world. The Spirit is the Breath of God who gives life to all creatures (Psalm 104:29-30). The Spirit comes over Mary and gives life to the Christ child in her womb (Luke 1:35). The Spirit raises people who are dead to God to new life in Christ. It is by the Spirit that we are born again (John 3).

The Spirit gives new life to the church. *Living Faith* adds a second line to the traditional wording of the Nicene Creed in calling the Spirit the renewer and helper of God's people. There are many times when we look at our situation and ask, "Can these bones live?" Then we remember that "if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you" (Romans 8:11).

God the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life, the Renewer and Helper of God's people, is also God with us. *Living Faith* describes the presence of God in three sentences. It begins with a wide-angle view. By the Spirit, God is present in the world. The Spirit is present outside the church as well; in the world where we are facing enormous ecological, sociological, political and spiritual challenges—climate change, poverty, world hunger, conflict, tension, religious intolerance. *Living Faith* reminds us that God is not absent or indifferent to the broken world. God is present by the Spirit and ceaselessly at work as the source of all goodness and justice.

While we recognize the presence and work of the Spirit in what is good and true and just in the world, we also confess that the Spirit's presence in the world has a specific focus. The Spirit convinces the world of sin and testifies to the truth in Christ. The Spirit always directs us towards Christ. The second part of chapter four continues this thought. The Spirit enables us to believe. Remember, "no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

The third section takes us a step further. Our modern individualism would have us think in terms of the private experiences we have of the Spirit, and the personal blessings that we receive from the Holy Spirit. But that is not the biblical message. The Spirit's work is not limited to individual believers. The Spirit forms and equips the church. Those who believe are united to Christ and also to one another. We are united by the same Spirit who dwells and works in all of us. We are blessed with various gifts that we use to serve God and one another. The Spirit is the great church builder.

Now that we know all these things, what do we do? We pray. Chapter four ends with a prayer of invocation, "Come, Holy Spirit!" It is not enough that we are able to articulate an understanding of the Spirit. Knowledge of the Spirit is not an end in itself. We are called to live by the Spirit and *Living Faith* gives expression to this call by directing us to pray.

"Come, Holy Spirit! Guide us into truth." ■

Rev. Dr. Gerard Booy is pastor of Haney, Maple Ridge, B.C.

Return of the Prodigal Son by Rembrandt van Rijn (1661-1669)

Deaths and Resurrections

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

BY LAURENCE DEWOLFE

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 10, 2013

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Jesus says, "There was a man who had two sons..." People hunker down for a good two-son story. Two-son stories always have a good one and a bad one. Oh! This one has a really bad son in it!

The younger son says, "Father, I can't wait for you to die!" That's not exactly what Jesus says he said, but that's what people hear! The father should whip that boy good!

But, Jesus says, the father just gives it all up. Son number two takes his father's life. With a stroke of a pen he erases his father's footprints from the earth.

Son number one shirks his responsibilities. He doesn't stand up for his father! He doesn't leave the farm! But he takes what he's given.

This is a seriously messed up family! Can this story have a happy ending?

The younger son goes off and soon slides from worse to worst. From parties with prostitutes to the pits with the pigs. He "glues himself" to a farmer (verse 15). He has his independence from his father. Now he's utterly dependent on a stranger.

Jesus wants us to see just how low this boy will go. He'll steal food from the pigs if he can.

Then, Jesus says, he comes to himself, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger!" (verses 17-18a) He heads home, ready to offer to do slave labour on the faint chance he'll get a roof over his head.

Doesn't he remember? He's as good as killed his father! Unless ... Maybe his father will rise from the dead and make all things new. No. That's too much to ask for!

Father springs to life at the first glimpse of the ➤

Can you find Hugh Turner?

The members of North Caradoc-St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Strathroy, Ontario would like your help in identifying Hugh Turner in this group photo from the early 1900s. This is the only photograph they have of the man whose bequest to the church has had such an enduring impact on the congregation's life and ministry. The only problem is they don't know which one he is! In 1943, Mr. Turner left two shares of Huron and Erie Savings and Loan Society, valued at $200, to North Caradoc Church through his estate as an endowed gift for the church. Seventy years and several mergers and stock splits later, Hugh Turner's gift of $200 has grown to be worth over $160,000! The income generated from the investment has provided funding for building projects at the church and enabled the congregation to hire a part-time staff person to expand their ministry with children and youth. The people of North Caradoc-St. Andrew's may not be able to identify Hugh Turner in this old photo, but they can certainly identify the signs of his continued presence among them through the endowment fund established through his bequest.

To learn how you can make a lasting difference through a gift of stock, a bequest in a will or some other planned gift, contact:

The Planned Giving Office
The Presbyterian Church in Canada
50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, ON
1-800-619-7301
plannedgiving@presbyterian.ca
or go to
www.presbyterian.ca/provisionaries

Planting seeds of hope
For generations to come.

boy! Everything he does is far beneath the dignity of a father. Especially one whose son has killed him. But Father's back from the dead and can do what he wants. He steals from son number one to put on a party, right there, in the middle of the day!

Number one son hears what's going on. Does he have the honour, the grace to step in? He should at least play joint host with his father. No. He violates every standard of hospitality. He won't even pretend to welcome his brother. He humiliates his father in front of the guests.

The only one who does what he's supposed to do in a two-son story is the second son! He comes home. He comes back from the dead (verse 32).

Jesus leaves the story here. The people around him scratch their heads. What are they supposed to think? And what are we supposed to think about this story?

Remember the death at the beginning of the parable. Two sons take their father's life away.

Remember the death in the middle of the story. One son loses the life he has claimed for his own. His only hope is his father, and he killed him!

Remember the resurrections in the story. The father comes to life at the first sight of his son, and nothing will stop him loving that boy back to life!

Remember the elder son. Dead to his father's love. His father pleads with him to come and join the party. Come, and live.

Our hope is in One who lived fully, loved freely, and died. We're dead if we stick to the rules that say good people don't just give their lives away, and the dead just don't rise.

Come, and live, says Jesus. Come and join the party. We'll never understand God's penchant for breaking all our rules. So, says Jesus, just come! Come and celebrate! The lost can be found! The dead can live again. ■

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe is on sabbatical from Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

PWS&D IS THE DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

ABRIDGED VERSION

PWSDevelopments

The quarterly newsletter for Presbyterian World Service & Development • 2013 Edition, Issue 1

STRONG AND WILLING:

My Experience in East Africa

Water pan under construction near Ghazi. This is a food for work project to improve access to water.

BY STEVE McINNIS

In November 2012, I joined eleven other participants for a two week Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) Food Study tour to Kenya and Rwanda. I chair a CFGB growing project in Woodstock, Ontario, which involves participants from many denominations, including Presbyterians. Our proceeds support PWS&D and similar church agencies.

After a day of orientation in Nairobi we drove six hours to Voi. Here we saw efforts to improve food security for more than 400 families in the Ghazi district. This is my recollection of the visit:

A WARM DAY WITH A BLUE SKY AND only a few clouds, not suggesting rain. It had rained nearby overnight, but not here where drought conditions have persisted for 8 years. As morning turns to noon we arrive to witness a food distribution, careful to don our hats and slather any exposed skin with sunscreen. Two of us take photographs while the rest take notes, pose with the first recipients and mingle.

We fear that the photo-op is just taking advantage of the beneficiaries while we assuage some of our guilt from the obvious disparity between their lives and ours back home. But in the eyes of the recipients, it brings legitimacy to the food distribution. They see the donors (represented by us) noting that the food is distributed in a fair and orderly way. There are speeches explaining who the visitors are and stating that the food is distributed as agreed to by the donors. In Kenya, corruption permeates so many levels of ▶

Steve and Benson at the distribution

society that it's hard for anyone to fully trust any organization, or even their own neighbours.

A festive atmosphere develops as we help carry bags of maize and split peas. The distribution requires that five families share the 50 kg bag of split peas, so the bag must be opened and the contents divided. At first we make the mistake of damaging a couple of the bags as we enthusiastically rip them open with a pocket knife. Then we are taught the value of saving the bags for future use and how to undo the bag by pulling the right string. We relearn this lesson later when we are asked not to crush up our "disposable" water bottles.

Most of the recipients divide up their portion with their neighbours, who are then obliged to participate in the work done to "earn" the food. The neighbours were not identified in the selection of food recipients, but they have strong backs and willing hearts to assist in return for some maize, split peas, oil and the eventual benefit of the work project.

The work is digging a community water pan or pond. The pan is carefully designed to collect runoff during the too-infrequent rains and provide water when otherwise there would be little. Usually work commences before the first food distribution, but this group was too weak with hunger to put in a day's hard work so an exception was made.

Their ten days of work per month will require them to travel up to 3 hours each way and move an allotted amount of stone and dirt under the direction of the project manager. The work is especially hard because they are excavating the stone with their own household tools.

I have a chance to talk with Benson Kimonge Chombo, a project beneficiary, as he prepares to divide his 50 kg of maize with his neighbour. Benson's story is a classic example of how people cope with a lack of food or the money to buy it. Before the food program began, he travelled 6 hours to Nairobi in an attempt to find work, hoping to send money home to support his pregnant wife. Benson found that there were no jobs in Nairobi, despite his passable English. In situations like these, families often cope by selling livestock, household items and even their metal roofing — but this family didn't have to go that far. Benson was able to return home when his wife qualified for the food distribution program.

This was just one of our project visits during our two weeks in Kenya and Rwanda.

In the past year, PWS&D has worked in partnership with CFGB in 15 countries to respond to hunger and ensure food security for families. To find out more about how you can be involved with CFGB – through a food study tour, involvement in a local growing project or advocacy opportunities – visit www.foodgrainsbank.ca.

– Steve McInnis chairs a CFGB growing project in Woodstock, Ontario and is a member of Knox Presbyterian Church, Woodstock.

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Editor: Karen Bokma, Communications Coordinator

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Translating Calvin

SEPARATING THE MAN FROM THE LEGEND. **BY NIRMAL DASS**

There are many versions of John Calvin. There is Calvin the humourless, zealous reformer, with a fiery disposition. There is Calvin the father of modernity; Calvin the inventor of capitalism and ergo rampant consumerism; Calvin the militant; even Calvin the dictator of Geneva, hounding Michael Servetus all the way to a fiery death at the stake. As with all famous men, there is a thick encrustation of legend upon an otherwise ordinary life. Needless to say, all these versions of John Calvin are easily refuted when we begin to look closely at this extraordinary man.

When we scrape away the mythology and see Calvin for what he really was, something unexpected emerges. Instead of a zealot, we find a profound humanist. Instead of a humourless man, we discover a man who relishes a good glass of wine, good company and laughter. Instead of a capitalist, we meet someone deeply committed to understanding the moral underpinning of economics. Instead of an ardent warmonger, eager to destroy his enemies, we encounter a man of peace. Instead of a dictator holding the city of Geneva in a tight fist, we encounter a preacher often and usually ignored by the city government. And as for Michael Servetus, we uncover a Calvin angrily disagreeing with him, but agonizing when he cannot save him from death at the stake.

Publically, Calvin had achieved fame in his time through his writing, which was fundamentally theological in nature and sought to outline the human response to God's love. On a more mundane level, Calvin is considered the inventor of modern French prose because he was the first one to write extensively in that language. His French is clean, precise, economical, and it is much admired in France to this day.

And then there is the private individual. Calvin the man reveals himself slowly, almost reluctantly, in his letters. ➤

What kind of disciples will impact today's world with the Gospel?

What kind of churches will prepare that kind of disciples?

What kind of ministers will lead that kind of church?

Three important questions about theological education at the heart of Presbyterian College's new strategic vision.

Watch for details, and join the discussion when the summary plan is released online in 90 days.

info@presbyteriancollege.ca

He was a prodigious writer and this is reflected in the number of letters he wrote in his lifetime—well over 8,000. Many of them, however, have not survived. So far, we only have 3,200 of them. Perhaps more will be found in the archives of Europe over the years; one letter here and another there. It is slow, meticulous work. And it is only now that all the extant letters are being systematically studied and published in Switzerland by the Librairie Droz.

Over the past few years, I have been endeavoring to translate the letters of John Calvin. Like all such attempts, it is protracted and painstaking work. These letters are written in Latin (a very beautiful, elegant Latin, harking back to the style of Cicero) and French—Middle French, to be precise, which is rather different from modern French. Calvin's usage of both these languages points to a very graceful facility.

Translation is all about intimacy. Reading is appreciative. Analysis is descriptive. But to translate means entering the very mind and soul of the original author and becoming that author in another language. Translation follows, or mirrors, the very process of writing—literally, word by word. And it's all about an afterlife because a book comes to exist in a language for which it was not really written, and it speaks to people who cannot know the original. This is why "translation" (the word derives from the Latin term meaning, "to carry over") is often used as a metaphor for salvation, for each work has an essential quality (a soul) that can be made to live in another realm (language). A book may lie forgotten or dead in the original language, and suddenly it is translated and is reborn; that is, it comes to be read again.

These letters need an afterlife; they need to be better known, more widely read, which is why I am translating them. They are an invitation to us to enter his world, a world of 500 years ago. And what we find are captivating details. For example, there is reference in one of Calvin's letters to an event known as the "Amboise affair." It is a letter written in 1561 to Gaspard de Coligny, the French admiral (and also a Protestant). With this one reference we are suddenly caught up, along with Calvin, in high Renaissance intrigue.

The scene is quickly set. The year is 1560. France is ruled by a 15-year-old king named Francis II, who is married to the 17-year-old Mary, Queen of the Scots. Mary's maternal uncles, the Guises, use the young royal couple as pawns to further their own power. Prominent French Protestants, most of them members of the nobility, wanted to win greater freedom for their co-religionists through the use of violence. They were led by Jean du Barry, lord of la Renaudie. Their plan was simple and bold: Abduct the young king and his wife and imprison the Guises. In previous months, the conspirators had been going throughout Europe trying to win support. One among them came to Geneva to win Calvin's support for the plot. As is obvious, word of the plan got back to the Guises.

On March 17, 1560, the young king and his wife were in residence at the ancient chateau of Amboise, which rises up from the Loire River. The conspirators gathered their forces and attacked the chateau. But the Guises were ready for them and it did not take the royal forces long to win the day. Jean du Barry was killed; his body was dismembered and hung from the walls of the chateau. A bloodbath followed. Anywhere from 1,200 to 1,500 Protestants were executed and all their bodies were hung from the walls of the chateau.

Calvin's letter is likely hastily written sometime at the end of April or early May of 1561. Hastily because it is undated, which is unusual for Calvin. Gaspard de Coligny was the highest-ranking Protestant in the royal court, and he had not been part of the conspiracy. Coligny wanted Calvin's assurance that he had not sanctioned the rebellion. And Calvin, too, was

anxious to make sure his name was not used in the justification of this uprising; something that likely had already happened. *"J'auroy la bouche ouverte pour monstrer qu'on me faict grand tort en me chargeant de telles calomnies."* ("I will open my mouth to show that those that charge me with such slanders do me great wrong.") And he is writing to show that he is not dissembling and trying to backpedal. *"Tant y a que mon intention n'a pas esté de nager entre deux eaux."* ("For it is not my intention to swim between two waters.") Calvin's letters are filled with such colourful expressions.

Calvin states that he was indeed contacted by the conspirators, but that he refused to give his support and tried to dissuade them. But they were too far gone in their plans to listen to his advice. Calvin characterized du Barry and his fellow conspirators as, *"chevaliers errans, ou de la Table ronde"* ("knights errant or knights of the Round Table"). He describes them as being *"ensorceléz"* ("under some spell") and their enterprise he calls *"un jeu de petis enfants"* ("a game of little children"). And when they persist, he asks a devastating question, *"Avez-vous si mal profité en l'escole de Dieu, que de mal faire au plaisir des hommes?"* ("Have you learned so badly in the school of God as to do evil for the pleasure of men?") Calvin is afraid that such rash action will quickly get out of hand and make matters worse for all Protestants in France. And then he makes a very pertinent point: It is often the innocent who must pay the consequences of rash acts. He uses a very interesting proverbial expression to convey this idea: *"Car il estoit bien à presume que plusieurs innocents eussent porté la paste au four de ce qu'ils ne pouvoient mais."* ("Because we can well presume that many innocent people will have to carry the dough to the oven for those who won't carry it themselves.") It is because of expressions such as this that Calvin is so highly regarded in France; he uses and therefore preserves sayings and adages that have long vanished, but which are so very adequate for what he wants to communicate.

These letters need an afterlife; they need to be better known, more widely read, which is why I am translating them

Near the end of the letter, he explains that he is writing to Coligny for two reasons. First, to set the record straight as to his own involvement, or moral support, of the conspiracy; and second, to find a way to prevent fallout from these unfortunate events. To back up his words, he informs Coligny that he stated his opposition to Monsieur Coignet, the king's ambassador, and that he preached against it from the pulpit, to which his congregation is a witness. He has always sought, *"bien at repos public du païs de France, et à la sureté de l'estat du roy"* ("the welfare and peace of the people of France and the security of the king").

There is also in this letter a forecast of things to come as a direct result of actions such as this rebellion. It takes the form of a dire warning: *"S'il s'espandoit une seule goutte de sang, les rivières en decoulleroyent par toute l"Europe."* ("If a single drop of blood is spilled, the rivers will overflow in all of Europe.") Violence begets violence. Calvin knows this very well, which is why he opposed the Amboise plot. And this rebellion, in fact, became the catalyst in the bloody years that followed, namely, the Wars of Religion in which Roman Catholics fought Protestants for over 30 long years.

King Francis II died only after eight months on the throne, on December 5, 1560. Mary, no longer the queen of France, and just 19 years of age, returned to Scotland in August of 1561. From there she would try to become the queen of England, struggle with John Knox, and finally be executed by Elizabeth I in 1587.

Translating letters such as this one provides us a glimpse of the world in which Calvin lived, a world in which to be a Protestant was an act of the greatest courage; a world in which the ideas of Calvin had firmly taken hold, and these ideas were affecting the deepest social and spiritual transformations; and a world in which the idea of tolerance was being slowly forged.

Translating Calvin's letters provides such immediate confrontation with history and ideas that a world long vanished becomes suddenly revealed, and therefore comprehensible. By undertaking a fresh version of these letters in English, it is my wish and hope that they will reveal a man of the deepest faith and the keenest mind. A lesson that we are certainly in need of learning, since we are constantly trying to come to understand clearly and precisely the profound relationship between faith and reason. The two, these letters show us, are not separate; and perhaps our insistence on separating them has led us into uncharted waters that we cannot navigate. ■

Dr. Nirmal Dass teaches in the archaeology and classical studies department of Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ont.

Minding the Minister

CLERGY BURNOUT IS A HUGE ISSUE IN OUR CONGREGATIONS.

BY FRED STEWART

Easter comes in April more than 80 per cent of the time this century. This year it comes at the end of March. For me it means Lent comes quickly after Advent and the Christmas season. It seems that one is barely over and planning for the next begins. It didn't take me too long in ministry to realize the importance of planning my vacation and study leave carefully to ensure that my breaks were well timed.

Here is my concern. I have heard too many ministers say they have neglected to take off the time to which they are entitled. They always give reasons. Some are good; but most are insufficient. It's not the only reason for burnout but I am willing to venture that it is a major contributing factor.

Minister burnout is a major concern. Congregations that dream and pray for turnaround and renewal will be thwarted and disappointed if this happens to their ministers. Then finger pointing and blame laying aren't far behind. The frustration of all this can lead to the kind of conflict that can damage ministries and relationships for the long term.

Instead, we need a culture of loving care for all our leadership. Congregations need to ensure that their ministers are leading balanced and healthy lives. Everybody needs to ensure that the load is not piled onto too few. Presbyteries need to take their responsibilities for pastoral care of their members more seriously. There should be accountability of ministers to their presbyteries for their time off, including ensuring proper days off.

There is more. I am not the first person to discover that ministers often have unsatisfactory spiritual lives. It is hard for many ministers to find time and energy for personal worship, prayer and Bible study when so much of their lives are spent in leading these activities for others. How ironic that spiritual leaders experience the very spiritual dryness they work so hard to help others avoid.

Let me shine light into one more corner. Our ministers experience relationship and family stress that can reach beyond what most people could understand or believe. With the emotional, spiritual and time demands, a minister can survive only when there are very intentional checks and balances. The members of his or her family can too easily be the victims of the results of someone doing their very best to do what they believe God has called them to do. They deserve all the love and care we can give them.

Let me encourage all of our clergy to find a small peer group where they can be vulnerable, transparent and held accountable for their lifestyle and choices in ministry. Let me encourage sessions to have a pastoral care committee to ensure every effort is made to support their minister. Let me encourage presbyteries to take their pastoral responsibilities seriously. Let me encourage all to ask for help when things are headed out of control. There are resources from the Centre for Clergy Care and Congregational Health at Knox College, Toronto, our denomination's Employee Assistance Program, and the appropriate committee of your presbytery.

We at the Renewal Fellowship are committed to pray for our denomination's ministers and congregations. We believe that prayer changes things and we encourage you to join us. ■

Rev. Fred Stewart is the executive director of the Renewal Fellowship.

ILLUSTRATION BY ISTOCK PHOTO

Community of Compassion

EVANGEL HALL CELEBRATES 100 YEARS. **BY LAURIE WATT**

Not far from trendy Queen Street West, where clothes, style and looks are seen to be the substance of who people are, is Evangel Hall.

A ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Canada celebrating its centennial in 2013, Evangel Hall is a place of hope where the individual's heart is what matters, where someone can find understanding and strength to make a new life, where someone can find a sense of belonging.

It's a community of compassion.

Evangel Hall is where Mike Dapic has been coming for 20 years. It was where he began his new journey and he finds himself coming back for support during the rough patches and slippery slopes of life, in an era of government social service cutbacks.

"There's stability here. People are comfortable and safe. It's one of the few places I go to," said Dapic, who ventured in initially because he needed help finding a place to live. He would come for a hot meal, a shower and encouragement.

"I've dug myself out of the hole many times. A person has to keep an open mind. Otherwise, you'll be closed off from the help that's available. It's a great place, man. You have to develop the tools to get out of the hole."

And that's exactly why Presbyterian minister Rev. R.J. Koffend set up Evangel Hall Mission in 1913.

It began as a place to serve the marginalized, ➤

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAURIE WATT

Ann-Marie Morris, senior development officer, Joseph Taylor, executive director, and Paula Aceto, special events coordinator.

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the struggling and the at-risk people who live in downtown Toronto; many of whom were immigrants at the time.

Evangel Hall has spent most of its years on Queen Street West, at Portland Avenue, and it has grown and changed to meet the needs of those it serves. It moved 'round the corner to a new $14.5-million building so it could offer supportive housing in addition to the drop-in centre, meals and street-level programs it's renowned for.

"Our focus is creating a community. This is a place where you can belong, be at home, be accepted for who you are," said executive director Joseph Taylor.

"No matter where you came from or what you've done, come in and be a part of our community."

Many congregations support the mission that proclaims the hope that Jesus Christ offers in a fashionable, artsy district.

Taylor and his staff and 1,500 volunteers help each and every person become the best they can be through a variety of programs in which they meet people one-on-one. They ease people's burdens—which can be heavy when you walk the streets feeling hopeless.

Beyond the better-known programs like Out of the Cold and the drop-in centre, there are others that play just as significant a role in the lives of those they serve—like the high school homework club, groups for preteen boys and girls, a breakfast club and social groups for men and women.

There are the medical and dental clinics. There's the clothing bank and the voluntary financial trusteeship program, which helps people manage their money so they can make ends meet.

There's also a community garden, a sixth floor patio that offers a view of the skyline and a community kitchen in which people learn to cook on a budget.

There's the Spirit Circle, a small group that encourages understanding, friendship and forgiveness between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people through drumming, storytelling and sharing. The sense of community grows beyond the friendships in the group to

Left: The community kitchen. Right: Tom LaFrance provides a massage.

Taylor and his staff and 1,500 volunteers help each and every person become the best they can be through a variety of programs in which they meet people one-on-one

nature and creation.

Dapic knows that while his basic needs can be met as soon as he approaches the door—starting with the warm welcome, the food, the clothing, the medical help and an array of personal support programs—he ultimately needs to take responsibility. He doesn't want a handout. He looks for encouragement and guidance.

"You have to do the legwork to move forward. It's a hard life," he said.

For some, the first step is to get off the street.

Located right beside the Factory Theatre is the relatively tall Evangel Hall. There are two doors: one adjacent to a sheltered patio area for the drop-in centre and another that's the private residence for those who live in the 84 rent-geared-to-income units.

It's like any other apartment building—except you're likely to get a warm welcome from someone coming or going and who is quick to testify about the difference mission staff make.

"We have about 110 people who live in the building. All were previously homeless or very much as risk of being homeless," explained Taylor.

"These people have had a diagnosis of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or clinical depression. It's a real struggle. Most of those individuals wouldn't be able to secure competitive employment and would be reduced to being on Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program."

For too many others, there's not enough housing and not a chance to make it into one of EHM's units.

They turn to the housing market. The math of making ends meet is startling. Ideally, 30 per cent of one's income should be spent on housing, Taylor explained.

For an ODSP recipient, that translates to $575 per month, which doesn't go far in any city, let alone Toronto. For an apartment, $1,000 per month isn't uncommon. Then add in heat and water, and items like clothing, food and transit tickets become frills.

"They have to beg for everything else. That's where Evangel Hall Mission comes in," said Taylor. "It's not a sad story. We work very hard to create a community where people feel like they belong. That's what matters."

Putting a coat on someone who doesn't have one seems so basic. But surprisingly, most social service agencies don't give away clothes; they ask people to pay token amounts for clothing. Evangel Hall is one of only two in Toronto that provide free clothes.

"If you're on welfare and you're having to beg for your food, what's the point of asking you to give 25 cents or 50 cents for your shirt?" said Taylor, who added EHM gave away 15,000 pounds of clothing last year.

Evangel Hall also offers free use of its laundry facilities for those who drop in.

As well as providing the shirt on their backs, EHM helps people manage the money in their pocket. Staff will make it go further and make sure the rent gets paid. Everything else can be found at the mission, which serves more than 100,000 meals each year. ➤

Putting a coat on someone who doesn't have one seems so basic. But surprisingly, most social service agencies don't give away clothes. Evangel Hall is one of only two in Toronto that provide free clothes

The mission's sixth floor patio.

About 200 people visit the drop-in centre each day.

Others will come for medical support, dental clinics or for after-school help or to meet up with friends in a fellowship group. Spiritual and emotional comfort are served in all of them, along with encouragement to keep on the journey.

Even kids can feel it's hopeless, but Taylor knows the difference staff and volunteers make. He knows the challenges the downtown folk face.

"People will say you're successful because you work hard. But you can take kids from an inner city neighbourhood and take them to a suburban area and they will perform as well as the kids from that neighbourhood. The reverse is also true: take kids to an area where there is violence and drugs and they will perform as poorly as the kids there. We like to believe (success) is because I'm good or talented," he said, but that is a delusion.

Evangel Hall gives not just hope to those kids and teens. It gives them the support they need to take advantage of opportunities and to succeed.

"We had Henry and his mom. They came for a horrible health issue." Taylor recalled the family that had been referred by the Hospital for Sick Children. "He's finished high school now and has received a scholarship to go to college."

Development officer Ann-Marie Morris is reminded several times each day of the difference the mission makes in people's lives.

"These people really have the will to live and the strength to do better. Hopefully they find that here," she said.

Fifteen to 20 per cent of the residents are working or retraining, and they go on to become independent.

"If you spend a year on the streets, your chances of escaping that are very, very poor," Taylor noted.

At the same time the economy soured and more people turned to life on the streets, the City of Toronto reduced services for the poor and at risk.

The charitable sector struggles to make ends meet as 90 per cent of donations made in Canada each year go to hospitals or universities, Morris explained.

The time many mission volunteers give is invaluable. The crew includes seven dentists, eight hygienists, a dental assistant and a denturist.

Taylor recalled the joy expressed in the smile of the dental clinic's first patient.

"The very first person who came to the clinic was receiving welfare. He called and called and called. He went to the dentist and was told all they would do is pull his teeth. He said, 'I have four or five that need to be fixed.'"

And they were.

"He had a big smile and he started to cry. He said people who are paid will pull my teeth, but people who are volunteers want to save them. What's wrong with this picture?"

Ontario Works recipients often only get their teeth pulled, Taylor added, and some dentists will not take on Ontario Works patients because of the rates they are paid. Last year, 1,100 people came to the dental clinic.

"A lot of the people who come to a hygiene appointment had never had a hygiene appointment in their life. We discover oral cancer."

At the clinic, 30 per cent of patients hadn't seen a dentist in five years and another 35 per cent had seen a dentist only once in the past five.

Other areas the poor often neglect are their backs and their feet. In a private room beside the main drop-in centre are a male nurse and a registered massage therapist, Tom LaFrance. The two work to help ease the pain and stress the poor endure walking the streets for hours each day.

The nurse helps with foot care. He'll cut toenails and buff sore, calloused feet.

LaFrance, formerly a Sunday dinner volunteer, offers a listening ear and a massage.

"When you see someone feeling more relaxed or see some of their pain has gone, that is really satisfying for me," he said. "If they're carrying a backpack, their shoulders or back are often sore. Part of it is just a hand on the shoulder, that healing touch." ■

Laurie Watt is a journalist in Barrie, Ont.

A Tale of Two Churches

WHY DID ONE CLOSE AND THE OTHER CONTINUE? **BY KEVIN MCCABE**

Susan Fielding-York grew up at Welland Avenue United Church, St. Catharines, Ont., where her parents and grandparents attended. She remembers when she was a youthful Sunday school teacher the church had 20 full classrooms, plus a few overflow groups, and a pre-school gathering in the gym. A few decades later, when the church closed, there were only a handful of kids. She recalled going to youth group and basketball night at what was once a very active building.

Susan's career path led her to a position with Community Support Services. It is funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services and by day fees from their clients. She is now the manager of the service housed at her former church. In fact, she helped negotiate the rental agreement with her own church elders. She was frustrated and angered by the negative attitude of one elder towards people with mental challenges. He suggested that their clients not be allowed to touch anything in the building, including mops and brooms. She told him sharply that you don't acquire Down Syndrome from touching doorknobs.

Susan was an interested observer of the struggles to keep Welland Avenue United afloat. She noticed that her mother's generation was reluctant to change, and the women's group always did the same things in the

PHOTOGRAPH BY ISTOCK PHOTO

Twenty-three years later we no longer have a Sunday school and the average age of the congregation is 75 years

same ways. There appeared to be little support for ministers who tried to diversify worship and programs. She recalled that one minister who attempted to lead worship songs with a guitar was not well received.

Since Welland Avenue had a variety of buildings, a sizeable parking lot, and a goodly amount of rentable floor space, it appeared to be in an enviable position among downtown churches. However, the sanctuary building was in serious need of upgrading and several major repairs were required in rapid sequence. The spire was in disrepair and would need as much as $300,000 to fix or $110,000 to dismantle. Despite many efforts there wasn't enough support to do the work. And the effort of trying led to burnout amongst the leaders.

Meanwhile, in the north end of St. Catharines, Grace Mennonite has two morning services. There's a traditional service at 9:30, followed by a joint coffee time, while an Anglican congregation, Good Shepherd, worships at 11:00. A rental agreement between the two congregations was worked out last year and promises to infuse new life into the building. Good Shepherd Anglican is the slightly larger body, with more midweek activities than Grace.

While not an ethnic Mennonite, I was drawn to Grace, firstly, because they had an excellent Sunday school in 1990, and, secondly, by their practical Christianity towards members, neighbors, and the larger world. Twenty-three years later we no longer have a Sunday school and the average age of the congregation is 75 years. I have been on board during several periods of turmoil while the church was working on its mission and identity.

Both churches have faced similar challenges. Why is one still open and the other not? Here, I believe, are some pertinent elements.

Local Leadership: Having effective leadership within the congregation is perhaps the single most important factor. This is more than just a minister and a pastor leading.

Community Involvement: Something as simple as renting space to community organizations can raise mutual awareness. Congregational participation in food drives, Out of the Cold programs, etc., will help to promote volunteerism and make contact with other community groups. And these activities do not need to be on a large scale. Having a church office which is open to the public more than a couple of hours a week may also draw street and community traffic. There seems to be a direct relationship between the health of a community and its churches.

Denominational Support: Grace Mennonite was supported by the denomination. Welland Avenue United did not have the same support. For the United Church, closing some churches was part of a larger plan dealing with the changing times and demographics.

Physical Plant Costs: Historic churches need to be more innovative about paying for specialized services. When the restoration experts hand you an estimate of $300,000, you need to wonder aloud whether there are other ways to address the issue, beginning with second, third, and fourth estimates. Sometimes church boards should be negotiating harder for a more workable deal, or calling in third parties to get a better feel for what is reasonable. In some cases, an historical site designation may be advantageous; sometimes it may not be. Municipalities and communities should be more aware of the value of historic and architectural buildings to their overall image, and be ready to intercede where possible. An association of historic churches may be helpful for exchanging ideas and strategies.

Forget Conventional Wisdom: Phrases such as "aging congregations," "declining membership," "shrinking resources," and "decaying structures" can become a mantra for closure. Congregations must dare to ask, so what? People at 65 can look forward to another 25 years of life. Quite often seniors have above average financial resources, as well as wisdom and abilities which need to be tapped. Old churches usually have abundant floor space for rentals. What is often lacking is local leadership and denominational encouragement.

Spiritual Matters: The Book of Revelation, chapters two and three, gives a picture of the individual congregation which is very different from the clipping file. Every church which closes has a mission statement nailed to its walls. And, to some degree, with every closure, that mission is aborted. Hence the feelings of failure which often surround the event. The absence of any reference in the newspaper file to the spiritual dimension of the local congregation is rather striking.

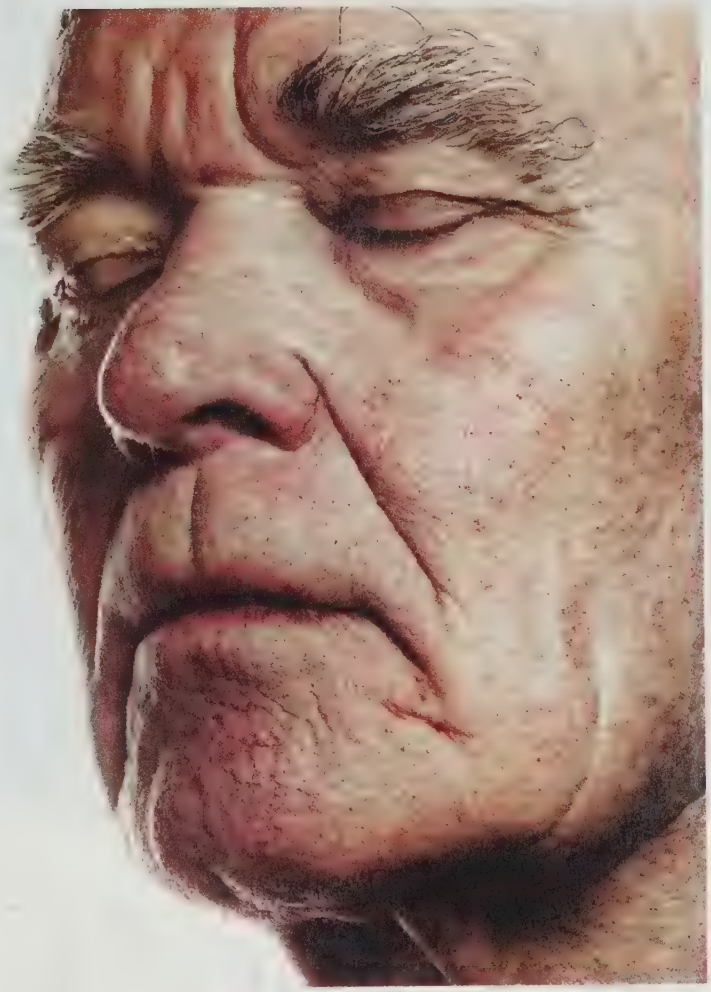
So where does this leave us now? With respect to externals, the church is pretty much in the same position as it was in the first century, when its neighbours were variously ignorant, indifferent, or hostile to Christianity. What has changed is that the first century church had a clear vision of who it was and what it was supposed to do. Over the centuries the church has accommodated itself to the world, and now the world no longer wants to play nice, or to play at all. The basic alternatives are to surrender unconditionally to pop culture (and therefore indirectly to neo-conservatism and/or neo-Marxism), or to attempt to recapture the vision and spirituality of Christians of the first century. Neither alternative promises a very easy walk. ■

Kevin McCabe lives in St. Catharines, Ont.

On Submission

HIS AGENDA IS ALWAYS THE BEST FOR US.

BY WILLIAM CRAIG



JAMES 4:7
SUBMIT YOURSELVES THEREFORE TO GOD

It began overseas, during a night I spent in a small pension, with a conversion experience that started with my repentance for a lifestyle that was falling short of God's expectations. It was a heartfelt apology to God for my transgressions. I was not looking for God, Jesus or salvation and had no idea at the time what was happening to me; except I knew I needed to repent.

The next three days and three nights were a series of small events guided by God (as I later came to understand) and do not need to be recounted here. On the third night, I was in a room in my hotel where my submission to Him occurred. I felt a complete heaviness in my body making it impossible for me to get up, move a muscle or even utter a sound.

Inexplicably, I gave up the struggle and submitted my will to whatever or whoever was the cause of my inability to move. It was over. I was willing to accept whatever should befall me. Immediately, a peace came over me and a vision of Jesus on the cross appeared in my mind's eye. This vision and feeling lasted several minutes and with my fear gone I fell asleep. In what seemed to be the blink of an eye, I awoke to a new day, able to move and speak normally. It was now glorious sunshine outside in contrast to the dark night sky when I fell asleep. I was surprised and relieved and noticed the peace that I felt from the night before was still with me.

Submission can instill a feeling of vulnerability because one's will is being forfeited. Some are fearful because they think God will immediately send them to the far corners of the earth to be missionaries. They fear they could not adjust to such circumstances and change of lifestyle. God may very well ask that; but He also said that He would give us what we need to live our lives if only we trust Him. He may also lead us to continue living with only moderate changes or even remain in our present circumstances. In any case it will always be with a new attitude and with Him sharing our burdens and leading the way.

In reality we never submit totally because humans have a sinful nature which cannot be removed until we are united with Jesus when he returns for his church. If we could submit completely we would be without sin and would never die (as was intended in the Garden of Eden). God is not going to ask more of us than we can bear. He knows what we need and has a plan for us which both pleases Him and us supremely. His agenda is always the best for us and we should not be fearful of it. ■

William Craig lives in Ottawa.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ISTOCK PHOTO

The Called Out Community

HOW TO BE CHURCH IN THE CITY. **BY RAFAEL VALLEJO**

I serve with a church east of Toronto's downtown core, in a neighborhood called Leslieville. George Leslie, a gardener, donated the land on which our church stands. That was about 136 years ago. Today Leslieville is being gentrified, which means that developers are buying old houses and are either fixing them up or tearing them down to give way to new developments. Some churches on our street have been sold to these developers and have become condos. What gentrification does is make living in Leslieville more expensive and more difficult for the poor who also live in our neighbourhood.

PHOTOGRAPH BY HELEN PYE

We are also careful not to use acts of service as an opportunity to talk people into coming to church. Many years ago, Luther rejected the idea of giving alms to the poor as a way of 'gaining merit for heaven.'

Queen Street East Church, on the corner of Queen and Carlaw, is in the middle of all of these changes. And the question we constantly ask ourselves is: What is God calling us to do here? How do we read the signs of the times (Matthew 16:3) in our city in light of the biblical and reformed tradition on which we stand?

In our tradition, we claim that all are called; all are gifted and enabled by God's Spirit to do God's work in the world. Everyone who believes shares this priesthood as we gather in community and celebrate the God we know in Jesus. This is the well from which we as a community draw energy to pray and make holy this city and world that God so loves. We work for the well-being of the city knowing that in doing so, we will find our well-being as well (Jeremiah 29:7).

We follow a Jesus who is crucified and risen. What this means is that only God has power over the forces of death that threaten our city and our world. Only God can do an Easter and raise us all to a new kind of life. We proclaim that Jesus is Lord, not Caesar. What does this mean for the way we preach and tell our stories about God?

When people at Queen East worship, we gather as a people of hope and we tell each other: May God smile on you today! We have with us new immigrants from Guyana to Ghana, and they have taught us that hope is that deep desire in all us for a more abundant life. The writer of John says that this is the reason why Jesus came to the world (John 10:10).

Among the people who warm the pews at Queen East every Sunday morning are the unclean, the unwashed, the undocumented and the unclear. Here among those who are made poor by the social and economic structures inside which we live, we do our best to tell truth and speak gospel.

We work hard at making them feel at home and have them sit with us at the table, knowing that they are "word and sacrament" of God's presence in our midst. We are still learning how to do this well.

We do service in our community not because we want to attract more members. We want to make sure that how we do service is mutual and equal (2 Corinthians 8:13-15) so that those we serve do not feel that they are being used as objects of our charity.

We are also careful not to use acts of service as an opportunity to talk people into coming to church. Many years ago, Luther rejected the idea of giving alms to the poor as a way of "gaining merit for heaven." There are many in our community who are on social assistance. They are aware that sometimes the programs directed towards them are not necessarily designed to serve their needs but the needs of the agencies that create them.

Queen Street East continues to be a small intercultural church where 20 or 30 gather in God's name. We are persuaded that although some may plant and others may water, "only God can give the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7). Call it an old fashioned religion; it is what it is. We have been through so much pain as a congregation, we have learned the hard way to trust and obey.

Grounded in prayer, our church has the freedom to do its work quietly without attracting attention to itself and without need for applause from anyone. We are nurtured "by God alone, by faith alone and by grace alone." And we have seen it work far more than we can ever dream of or imagine.

If church is about an alternative worldview, how are we on the eastern corner of Queen and Carlaw offering a different view of reality or of being church? All the billboards and the advertising around us in this big city are really calls to worship. How is our narrative "not conformed to the world" (Romans 12:2) and different from that of the dominant culture? When we look at the ways we do church, whose reality and whose power do we affirm? And how are we listening to the promised guidance of the Spirit at work in Jesus, in us and people of other faiths?

When the neighbour is the community, what does love-justice require of us? In this regard, we have found that it is sometimes easier to do kindness to people across the world than to the person who asks for spare change in the Shoppers Drug Mart across the street from our church.

We are slowly learning that the called-out community (*ekklesia*) that church is supposed to be does not just happen instantly. There is a process involved.

People tend to act with audacity when they decide to be idle no more and believe in their hearts that they can change the way things are in society. Those of us who practice ministry in the city can learn more about how to mobilize hope on the ground by using community organization as a tool for mission. See you on the street! ■

Rev. Rafael Vallejo is minister at Queen Street East, Toronto.

Witnessing the Message

RICK FEE TALKS ABOUT CHURCH IN THE CITY.

Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, spoke with the Record's *summer intern, Helen Pye, about the changing nature of the church in the city. This is an excerpt of the interview in Fee's own words.*

We've gone beyond the day where we build a building and people will come. Church buildings don't necessarily attract and increasingly I find congregations are saying it's when we go out of the building that we are church. You only have

ILLUSTRATION BY ISTOCK PHOTO

to go to a patio for lunch in Toronto to recognize there's a whole new world out there in an urban setting in Canada. Go to a sports arena on Sunday morning at 11 o'clock, that's where people are.

There is a minister here in Toronto who tried a Friday evening in a pub and called it Theology on Tap. The local pub owner offered an upstairs room and the minister invited anyone to come and bring their friends. They'd sit around and have a glass of beer but they also had topics they'd talk about. To me that is definitely where we start in today's urban society. That's where people are. You can have a little structure to start a discussion which also includes further conversations on social or personal issues.

Some of those people might come into the institutional church on a Sunday morning, and maybe they won't, but it's our witness to our message out in society that we are primarily about. To make people think theologically. Jesus met people in the temple and the synagogue on a few occasions, but most of the time he taught on hillsides or at weddings, out in society. So I think that's a challenge to us today.

It's going to be a challenge for us in the future. Many ministers are saying to us that they would like to have a ministry without walls, a ministry in the community, even house churches.

I think the Flemingdon Gateway Mission is a great example of a strong ministry—it's Christian, it's with the whole community, and it's different. Increasingly, we see this is what we want to be doing with our resources and as a witness out there in our society.

Success may not be in increased numbers of people or even in increased revenue; and that's the challenge because we've always thought a church has been successful if it balances the books at the end of the year. But now people are looking and saying, as Christians we should be taking our own resources and using them in society.

Like the Out of the Cold program. The resources of the church and individuals are used to cook food and make meals. But how do you rate the success of that? I guess the number of meals served or the people given a place to sleep; but does that increase the number of people coming to church? Doubtful. Does that relate to people's life being changed? Possibly. Jesus never asked us to balance the books or to come up with the final annual report that says what great things have been done. The call to be faithful, I think, is very important. And if we judge ourselves to have been faithful in doing what we see as Christian ministry then I think it goes a long way to declaring the success of a Christian endeavour and a Christian community.

Jesus met people in the temple and the synagogue on a few occasions, but most of the time he taught on hillsides or at weddings, out in society. So I think that's a challenge to us today.

I think there are enough resources available. The Presbyterian Church has been around for many years. There are funds available and many of them have been designated. We have funds that are to be used for training a minister who will be working in such and such an area or working at a particular ministry. We have these funds and we are ensuring they are well known, we're putting them on the website so people will know about them and they will know they can apply to use them. People left this money to be used for the Christian gospel; let's get it out there and then who knows what the result may be.

I think many times in the past we felt we had to build up the institution and keep these funds close to us and be gatekeepers, but today we recognize no, our responsibility as gatekeepers is to make sure resources are available—financial and human. I think we should encourage younger people, anybody actually, to make themselves available and if someone says they have a gift or a talent, we should find the resources to get those people out there with proper endorsement and education and doing what we believe Christians should be doing.

In the Presbyterian Church, with our egalitarian system, we don't have a top down hierarchy. So if we saw something had potential we would want to stimulate and encourage people to look at options. We could assist by having a speaker come to your presbytery to keep the discussion going. Rather than just relying on a maintenance mode of keeping the church going I think our role is to infuse ideas and to stimulate discussion at the presbytery level. We're always prepared to offer our own comments to stimulate that but we don't want to be seen as the national office coming in and declaring what you should do. That doesn't work in our system but to foster a discussion, yes that is what we should be doing. ■

Transcripts of all the interviews Helen Pye did for her feature article in this issue can be found online.

GOD IS NOT WAITING FOR US

CHALLENGES OF THE CHURCH IN THE CITY.

BY HELEN PYE • ILLUSTRATION BY MAGOZ

Rev. Rafael Vallejo walks me along his patch of Queen Street East in Toronto. First we go to the South Riverdale Community Health Centre to meet Wanda. She runs the Good Food Box program which is supported by Vallejo's church; then we see Raffi, a drug-addicted worker at South Riverdale's harm reduction centre. A little further down the street there's the Mustard Seed, where a small group of nuns offer their time and space for everything from English language practice and adult drop-ins to computer training and crafts. Later in the day he introduces me to a teenager who has recently sought asylum from Swaziland.

Vallejo is minister at Queen Street East Presbyterian. A once thriving congregation, it has struggled in recent years to keep its doors open. The neighbourhood around the church has changed; working poor and new immigrants form the core of an inner city demographic. The old church building shows its age. It struggles to find its identity. Vallejo's way of doing church goes beyond preaching on a Sunday morning; he takes the church to the street, engaging with those who visit the health centre, sharing coffee at the Leslieville Pumps restaurant, communicating through his Facebook page and walking through his community.

Of the approximately quarter million people who immigrate to Canada each year, about a third move to Toronto. (Vancouver and Montreal are the other two major centres.) The eastern part of the old city of Toronto has changed radically over the past few decades. Southern and Eastern Asians represent nearly half the population of that part of Toronto. Eastern Europeans add another 10 per cent. English is spoken by only three quarters

'Success may not be in increased numbers of people or even in increased revenue; and that's the challenge'

of that demographic. The average income is slightly below the city average. Parts of the neighbourhood are gentrifying with condos and new developments; parts are still among the most depressed areas of the megacity. There is a clash between the rich and the poor living side by side. But one thing is certain, neither of those categories, nor many of the new immigrants, are active churchgoers.

"We've gone beyond the day where we build a building and people will come," observes Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, general secretary of the Presbyterian Church's Life and Mission Agency. "Increasingly I find congregations are saying it's when we go out of the building that we are church. You only have to go to a patio for lunch in Toronto to recognize there's a whole new world out there in an urban setting in Canada. Go to a sports arena Sunday morning at 11 o'clock, that's where people are. Things have changed radically in our society and most congregations recognize that."

He continues, "We come together and we're strengthened within the institution; we are the church more appropriately when we head out and do things in the community. There is a minister here in Toronto who tried a Friday evening in a pub and called it Theology on Tap. The local pub owner offered an upstairs room and the minister invited anyone to come and bring their friends. They'd sit around and have a glass of beer but they also had topics they'd talk about. To me that is definitely where we start in today's urban society. That's where people are. You can have a little structure to start a discussion which also includes further conversations on social or personal issues.

"Some of those people might come into the institutional church on a Sunday morning, and maybe they won't, but it's our witness to our message out in society that we are primarily about. To make people think theologically. Jesus met people in the temple and the synagogue on a few occasions, but most of the time he taught on hillsides or at weddings, out in society. So I think that's a challenge to us today."

In my journey around Toronto I found some churches rallied to address the needs of the city and were primed to take advantage of the potential this new reality offers, yet others seemed unable or unwilling to face the urban landscape. With some suggesting the church will be closing another 300 congregations within the next 10 years, city congregations are being forced to examine what church really means.

Paul MacLean is executive director of Potentials, a sort of think tank on ministry and congregational development. He has been looking at the changing landscape of urban churches for a long time. "The Protestant majority is now in a minority. It's moving from a church which was at the centre of the neighbourhood, something you didn't question, it just seemed natural. You needed to have a church for Presbyterians to come to and for Scouts and Brownies and Cubs and Guides and for other neighbourhood organizations to use your space. You'd be connected and you'd have good relationships with similar churches near you. And suddenly, you've gone from a little enclave, and you're now in the minority and aging as a congregation. All these other things are happening as your resources are going down. Sunday schools which once had 80 now have six kids. Many churches have zero kids and you can see what that does to your identity."

The most immediate call for the urban church is to reconnect with the community in which it's situated: from Out of the Cold programs which respond to the immediate needs of the homeless and the hungry to long-term ministries or partnerships with social justice and community needs at their core. Yet it can be difficult for congregations to find the energy and desire when they feel isolated from a community that is so unlike themselves and has no interest in what goes on inside their walls.

CHANGING CHURCH

Since 2009, Hope United Church has been looking for ways to collaborate with groups in its neighbourhood. The congregation finally settled on the idea of transforming the empty basement into a community hub. But it wasn't to be.

"Basically, the board at Hope choked," explains Rev. Douglas duCharme. "It was too much; it felt like they were losing control of their building and it didn't look like church to them. They said, we don't get it, we don't understand; it's beyond us and it scares us. They didn't see that God is in the work that these community programs are doing."

According to duCharme, "the math of one building and one minister and one congregation equaling church has us in a straitjacket. We seem better able to deal with closing churches [than breaking with the traditional idea of church]."

Gateway Community Church in Toronto was a traditional congregation in many ways, facing the same demographic challenges as all urban churches. Rev. Dr. Bob Faris worked with Gateway through some of those years (as he did later with Queen Street East). "The congregation was putting all its energy into making sure there was a service

on a Sunday and somebody to be a representative at presbytery and enough people to make up a session. If that's all the church is, then it's not a church anymore," he says. He is now associate minister at St. Andrew's King Street.

From the ashes of Gateway an idea was born. In 2008, Rev. Paulette Brown was hired to run an after-school program with a mission to serve the working poor and working class immigrants in the neighbourhood of Flemingdon Park.

"I think the congregation felt they wanted the mission because they thought it could prolong the life of the church itself. It didn't work," she says. "It required skills you could hardly find in any one person to build this thing from scratch and nurture a congregation that knew it wasn't doing well."

Four years later, while the congregation didn't survive, the Flemingdon Gateway Mission continues to do life-changing work in its community. Through a successful homework club, a summer camp, leadership training and volunteer opportunities, Brown notes, "there has emerged a community of young people who are really involved in community work and interested in being role models for the younger ones; they are the ones who have tasted leadership and are craving it." Brown admits the future of the mission could be in jeopardy at any moment due to changes in government funding, but she remains adamant that even if the mission dies, the resurrection seeds have been planted in these young peoples' lives.

Many congregations do not have the resources, financial or congregational, to embark upon a ministry like the Flemingdon Gateway Mission. At the centre of the urban church, however, continues a need to explore a new way of doing church and living out a life faithful to God's calling.

Paul MacLean recognizes in this an older pattern. "I've been amazed by the number of social services started by downtown churches in the 1920s and '30s. You get a charismatic minister and he goes about persuading rich business people from his congregation that something needs to be done. The reason it's important now is the question of resources; it's very expensive running a congregation the way we do it in the historic Protestant denominations—staff costs are enormous, upkeep of aging buildings—it's a very expensive proposition."

Rick Fee echoes the same message: "Success may not be in increased numbers of people or even in increased revenue; and that's the challenge because we've always thought a church has been successful if it balances the books at the end of the year. But now people are looking and saying, as Christians we should be taking our own resources and using them in society.

"Jesus never asked us to balance the books or to come up with the final

RESOURCES

The Presbyterian Church has many resources congregations can use as they find ways to "do church" in their communities. Here are a few.

CREATIVE MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH FUND—Helps fund new one-time or ongoing creative ministry projects.

BURSARY FOR LAY TRAINING—Provides financial assistance for lay people who receive short-term training or instruction for Christian service.

AVONDBLOEM EXPERIMENTAL FUND—Offers grants to individuals or groups within the church (or to projects recommended by them) to support experimental projects which help spread the Good News and further the kingdom of God.

RENEWING MINISTRIES CAPITAL GRANT—Provides grants for congregational ministries that are involved in a significant, intentional change that will result in something new.

TEACHER/LEADER COURSES—Provide workshops on a wide variety of subjects (such as Christian education, church management or evangelism) and address the theological and practical concerns of congregations.

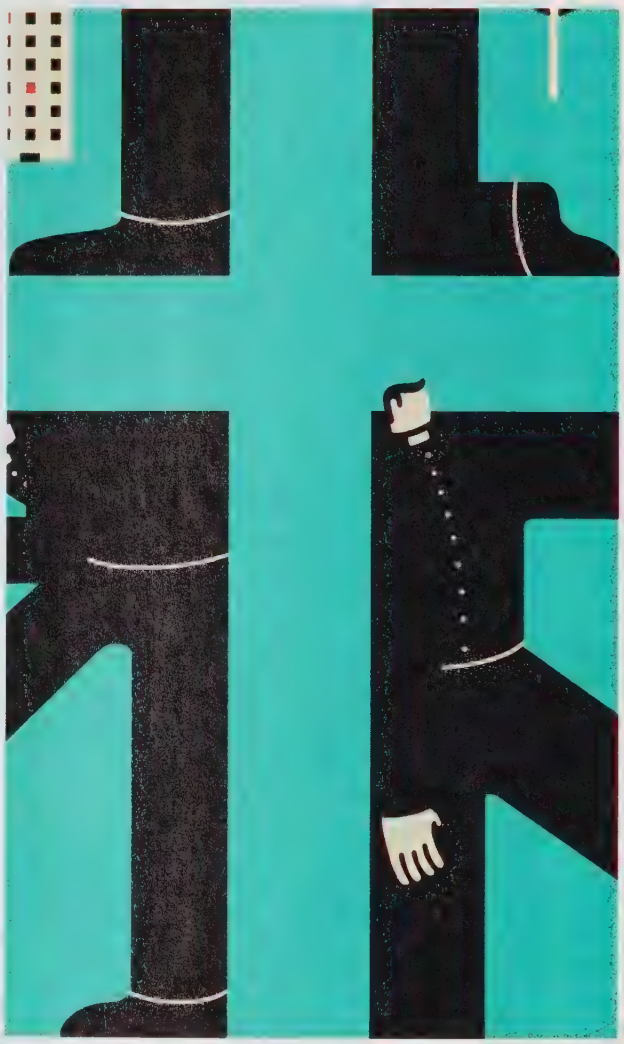
EQUIPPING FOR...—Christian education, congregational development, eldership, evangelism and outreach, and worship are a few themes Canadian Ministries tackles in these articles. Read them online at equippingfor.ca

NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE—For those establishing new congregations or interested in learning about new church development. Participants focus on leadership, discuss challenges, and share experiences and resources. Dates to be announced.

More can be found online at presbyterian.ca or by contacting Ian McDonald in Canadian Ministries.

'We've got to realize that God's not waiting for us; God is busily at work'

annual report that says what great things have been done. The call to be faithful, I think, is very important. And if we judge ourselves to have been faithful in doing what we see as Christian ministry then I think it goes a long way to declaring the success of a Christian endeavour and a Christian community."



COMMUNITY

Rev. Glen Soderholm has been working as a Christian musician for many years but recently he felt called to lead a congregation. He is pastor at Two Rivers Church, a church plant in Guelph, Ont. Community is much on his mind.

"Some churches are really great at social justice but it's often a handout: here's food or money but we're not integrating those people into the community. People go church shopping; they go to the places they think will meet their needs, like with a great nursery or lots of parking. But that creates abstract communities. What connects those people together? What I want to know is what it would be like to be part of a church that people walk to, that people are connected to because of a desire for human flourishing in their neighbourhood. It's not rocket science; it's not a new thing; but it feels like we've lost our way and forgotten about the people who live around us."

Here, it seems, is the crux of the urban church; with society yearning for authentic community, we need to connect the church back to the city. Douglas duCharme notes: "We've got to realize that God's not waiting for us; God is busily at work in the community around us planting seeds of His life, wholeness and reconciliation that the church has nothing to do with because we're so busy dealing with our own problems. This is not about converting people, it is getting the church involved in what God is doing in the world already that we have no clue about and nothing to do with."

While our default may pull us back to a comfy and inclusive Sunday services, the urban church is about doing God's work beyond four walls, and it seems God is the one demanding we redefine what we mean by church. These new ways of being church might simply be providing a meal for the homeless, setting up a community garden, offering space within your church or partnering with a community project. Regardless, the aim is not to increase the numbers in the pews or the church's revenue.

Paulette Brown's philosophy is based on the story of the Good Samaritan: "Being a neighbour in that story does not limit me to the Christian community. It is about what is required to get this person up and going again so they can carve their way and negotiate life."

To this, Rick Fee adds: "It's going to be a challenge for us in the future. Many ministers are saying to us that they would like to have a ministry without walls, a minister in the community, even house churches. Flemingdon is a great example of a strong ministery—it's Christian, it's with the whole community, and it's different. Increasingly, we may see this is what we want to be doing with our resources and as a witness out there in our society." ■

Helen Pye is a student at Oxford University. She was the Record's *summer intern in 2012. She lives in London, England.*

online extra

Extended interviews with all of those who participated in this article can be found at presbyterianrecord.ca. They are dynamic conversations filled with ideas for further discussion.

The Threat of Resurrection

THE REAL TRUTH IS TOO STRONG FOR US. **BY JOHN VISSERS**

Theologian Karl Barth once preached a sermon in which he described the resurrection of Jesus as a threat. I like that. We tend to think about the Easter message in ways that make us feel good.

We speak about the coming of spring after a long, hard winter. Or we stand at the grave of a loved one and console ourselves with the thought that life somehow continues spiritually. We associate the resurrection with beautiful flowers and inspiring music.

But if we think about it, the resurrection of Jesus calls everything into question. It challenges all our assumptions about who God is and what God is up to in the world.

That's why the American Methodist Bishop William Willimon describes the stark reality of the resurrection this way: "Easter is not about the return of the robin in spring or crocuses or a butterfly coming out of the cocoon or any of that pagan drivel. It's about a body that somehow got loose. The gospel accounts strain to describe what happened, but don't make any mistake about it, they're trying to describe something unearthly: death working backward."

"So," says Willimon, "I can't talk about 'the eternal rebirth of hope' or 'Jesus living in our hearts.' We're talking about a dead Jew, crucified, who came back to harass us. And it scares the heck out of us."

That's why the resurrection is a threat. It offends us. Sure, it's an offense to reason. After all, dead people don't normally come back to life.

But that's not the real offense. The real offense is that it forces us to face the fact that we can't beat death. We cannot extricate ourselves from the muck and mire of a sin-soaked world of death and destruction. Only God can do that.

PORTRAIT BY WESLEY BAILES/THREEINABOX.COM

The resurrection is a threat because God intervenes and does for us what we can never do for ourselves even though we think we can: God brings life out of death.

In the resurrection of Jesus, God pushes back at a broken bleeding dying world. We know that things are not the way they're supposed to be. Not in our communities, not in our churches, not in our families, not in our lives. We live in a world where sin, death and evil reign.

But in the resurrection of Jesus, God declares that things don't have to be this way. Sin, death and evil do not have the last word. The resurrection reminds us that we don't simply need a little help to renew our flagging spirits. We are dead and we need resurrection. And only the triune God of grace is in the resurrection business.

> Sin, death and evil do not have the last word. The resurrection reminds us that we don't simply need a little help to renew our flagging spirits. We are dead and we need resurrection. And only the triune God of grace is in the resurrection business

The real truth of the resurrection seems too strong for us, says Barth. But it refuses to be hidden in the harmless clothes with which we dress it at Easter. "It always breaks forth; it rises up and shouts at us." It asks us, "Do you not see that Jesus came to set you free, to give you life?"

"Christ is risen; he is risen indeed." Words that threaten. Words that offend. Words that give life. ■

Rev. Dr. John Vissers is director of academic programs and professor of historical theology at Knox College, Toronto.

People & Places

To make People & Places submissions, email: **peopleplaces@presbyterianrecord.ca**

St. Andrew's, Strathroy, Ont.
James Patterson holds a plaque presented in recognition of his 14 years of service as clerk of session. He is joined by his wife Janet (left), Rev. Steve Boose and Joan Wagner, the current clerk of session.

Kirkwall, Ont.
Fiddler Marty Pullin leads his band through a set of traditional Scottish songs at the church's annual Robbie Burns dinner. Ticket sales raised support for Delores Werchola's ministry with First Nations peoples in Prince Albert and Mistawasis, Sask.

Boston, Milton, Ont.
Family members dedicated a window in memory of Thomas and Elizabeth Michie and their daughters Ellen McDonald and Mary McGibbon. Joining them are the window's artists, David Morgan and David Brown. From left: Ryan McDonald, Jodi and Toby Watkins, Judy McDonald, Morgan, Brown, Tom McDonald and Joan Zuest.

Richmond, B.C.
Bob Gauvreau (front) celebrated his 90th birthday with fellow charter members Vi Mar and Tucker Goodwin. The former clerk of session still attends worship every Sunday.

First, Stellarton, N.S.
After 51 years as an elder, Gerald Reid has retired. Here, Rev. Charles McPherson presents him with a plaque in recognition of his dedicated service. Gerald and his wife Isabel continue to worship at First.

Hamilton, Ont.
The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada parade through Hamilton's streets before joining Central for their annual Regimental Sunday last fall. The congregation and regiment have enjoyed a close affiliation for decades.

ONLINE EXTRA

ON OUR WEBSITE:
Youth in Cornwall, Ont., host an ecumenical service; two young women make professions of faith in Pictou, N.S.; and a congregation in Tiverton, Ont., celebrates a member's 100th birthday.

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Ministry Opportunities

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Tabusintac, St. John's, New Jersey, Zion and Bartibog, N.B., St. Matthew's; Full-time three-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Derek Krunys, 206 Wellington St., Miramichi, N.B. E1N 1M7; dkrunys@hotmail.com.

Truro, N.S., St. James and St. Paul's; Full-time minister for two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Michael Koslowski, #2-75 Altavista Lane, Halifax, NS B3N 0A1; 902-402-6747; michaelkoslowski@eastlink.ca .

SYNOD OF QUEBEC AND EASTERN ONTARIO

Richmond, Ont., St. Andrew's; Full-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Kelly Graham, 5533 Dickinson St., Manotick, ON K4M 1A6; 613-692-4228; revkgraham@gmail.com.

Winchester, Ont., St. Paul's; Chesterville, St. Andrew's; Morewood; Full-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Jim Ferrier, PO Box 131, Maxville, ON K0C 1T0; 613-538-2582; jim_olga@sympatico.ca.

SYNOD OF CENTRAL, NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO AND BERMUDA

Ajax, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Lois Whitwell, 445 Beverly St., Oshawa, ON L1G 1P9; 905-579-8255; loiswhitwell@rogers.com.

Kapuskasing, St. John's Presbyterian and Kapuskasing United; Full-time minister for the new ecumenical shared ministry; Interim Moderator Rev. Arlene Onuoha, 113 Preston St., Timmins, ON P4N 3N1; 705-264-1051; arleneonuoha@hotmail.com and Pastoral Charge Supervisor Rev. Dale Young, 226-A Dixon St., Porcupine, ON P0N 1C0; 705-235-0855; northerndaisy942.dy@gmail.com.

Kingston, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Karen Bach; 613-929-3693; karen.bach@utoronto.ca.

Kitchener, Calvin; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator The Rev. J. Mark Lewis, 54 Queen St. N., Kitchener, ON N2H 2H2; 519-578-4430; revmarklewis@gmail.com.

Markham, Markham Chinese; Full-time associate minister for English-speaking ministry; Interim Moderator Rev. Sam Priestley, 19 Elm Lea St., Markham, ON L3P 3M8; 905-294-1633; sam.priestley@bell.net.

Nottawa, Emmanuel; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Heather Malnick, 206 Murphy Rd., Baxter, ON L0M 1B1; 705-424-0779; livingfaithbaxter@gmail.com.

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Obituaries

MacFarlane, John Alexander, 1916-2013. John MacFarlane, a member and elder of St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa, Ont., recently passed away at the age of 96. He had a remarkable life of Christian witness that went far beyond his local community. His enduring faith and devotion has been a strength and inspiration for all who knew him.

John became a member of St. Andrew's in 1940. He was a devoted member of the choir for 64 years—a record in the history of the church. In the early years he became a well-loved Cub and Scout Master. He served an extensive term on the temporal committee as both secretary/treasurer and chairman. In 1958, he was elected to the eldership and faithfully served this pastoral ministry until an advanced age. In addition to extensive leadership within the kirk session, including convening the worship and music committee, he served as representative elder to the Presbytery of Ottawa for 36 years and in 1995 was elected as the first lay moderator. He served as chairman of the finance committee of the Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario and was a commissioner to the General Assembly on four occasions.

John was also well-known for his work and devotion with the World Alliance (Communion) of Reformed Churches. As treasurer of the Caribbean and North American Area Council, he attended meetings over a span of 20 years in developing countries all over the world. He was very much respected for his life commitment to the Christian Reformed tradition and to a faith communion of social justice. John was gifted with strong leadership, financial vision and broad historical knowledge. He loved people and forged connections and friendships all over the world.

He will be very missed by his beloved family and his many friends at St. Andrew's. John is survived by his son John L. (Alina), his daughter Chris (Doug Green), seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren. ■

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Our Lady of Scars

A VISIT TO THE BIRTHPLACE OF JOHN CALVIN. **BY CONNIE WARDLE**

From July 6 to 22, Connie Wardle participated in a pilgrimage through countries touched by the Protestant Reformation—France, Switzerland and Scotland. This is the third of a series of reflections on the journey.

It was strange to think about John Calvin as a boy. In my mind, the reformer always looks like his portraits. He's either an intense, dark-eyed youth or an old man with a beard to rival Confucius. Yet as we stood in Noyon, France, the town where Calvin was born, I tried to imagine him as a child skipping with his family to Mass. Or, perhaps, being dragged half-heartedly.

I wonder what he thought of the Mass as a child. Was he captivated by the mystery of it? There would have been the smell of incense and the ceremony of the Eucharist, the words of the liturgy profound yet scarcely comprehensible to one who was only learning Latin.

Notre-Dame de Noyon stands only a street away from the site of Calvin's childhood home. He would have grown up with the sound of the church's bells and the shadow of its towers. Its architecture would have been familiar to him.

Today the church looks very different from the one John Calvin knew. History has not been kind to it.

Once, like most grand medieval churches it would have been ornate—even gaudy—with figures of saints, apostles, angels and demons. Today it's face is pock-marked with the remains of shattered carvings. There are almost no figures above its doors. I could find only two brave little statues clinging to a lintel. ➤

The interior of Notre-Dame de Noyon, France.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CONNIE WARDLE

During the French Revolution, too, the carvings outside the doors of Notre-Dame de Noyon were destroyed in the name of ideological progress, for the church was associated with the French monarchy

As Reformation fervor swept through France, believers smashed the statues that adorned many churches, believing the "graven images" to be idolatrous. During the French Revolution, too, the carvings outside the doors of Notre-Dame de Noyon were destroyed in the name of ideological progress, for the church was associated with the French monarchy.

The Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson, who visited Noyon in 1876, described the church as "some great old battle-ship" rising on a swell of ground "as though the good ship were bowing lazily over an Atlantic swell."

It was an apt description and, indeed, the church saw battle. During World War I, it was heavily damaged by German bombardments. By the end, portions of it were in ruins. It took decades to rebuild.

Our Lady of Noyon should be called Our Lady of Scars, I thought. Outside she bears old wounds. Inside, she is beautiful and full of light.

"I could never fathom how a man dares to lift up his voice to preach in a cathedral," Stevenson wrote. "What is he to say that will not be an anti-climax? For though I have heard a considerable variety of sermons, I never yet heard one that was so expressive as a cathedral. 'Tis the best preacher itself, and preaches day and night; not only telling you of man's art and aspirations in the past, but convicting your own soul of ardent sympathies; or rather, like all good preachers, it sets you preaching to yourself;—and every man is his own doctor of divinity in the last resort."

I wonder if a young John Calvin would have agreed. ■

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s senior staff writer.*

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Join us March 3rd, 17th and 31st (Easter) 10 am EST and March 29th (Good Friday) 12 Noon EST

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What does it mean to wait upon God? The biblical writers seem to use the phrase over and over again. Christian writers use the phrase repeatedly

"Ya, ya, that's it, the hayloft," Elsa said. "Do you know how to get a cow out of the hayloft?"

"Not hardly," I said. "I never had the opportunity to do that before. Cows don't usually climb ladders. How on earth did your cow get up into the hayloft anyhow?"

"There is no ladder," said Elsa. "There is just a steep set of narrow stairs with a landing and a corner halfway up. Someone left the door to the barn open and this stupid cow wandered in and somehow climbed those narrow stairs into the hayloft. I don't know how she ever negotiated the landing and the corner on the way up but she can't negotiate them to get down. I guess she knows she will get stuck like a cork in a bottle if she tries."

By this time folks were arriving for house church and each arrival was greeted with the same cow conundrum. Nobody arrived with a solution and our worship became salted with baffled brows, pauses to ponder, prayers and the offering of opinions on how to cowboy the cow out of the attic, er, I mean hayloft. By the end of worship, there appeared to be three ways for the cow to get down. She could climb the stairs down and get stuck like a cork on the landing; she could jump out of the second story hayloft access window and break her neck; or she could be ushered down as steaks and roasts.

There was a compounding component as well. The cow was in the latter stages of pregnancy and getting noticeably bigger in the belly by the day. This placed all three options on a rapidly deteriorating incline of feasibility. If all of this wasn't enough, the cow didn't appear to mind her lofty lounge. It was, after all, wonderfully warm, filled with hay and as long as someone trudged up the stairs with buckets of liquid refreshments on a regular basis, why would a cow want to leave all of this? The alternative from the cow's perspective was turning her rump to the wild winter winds of March and having to shoulder her greedy-guts herd mates for a place at the feed trough.

And so, by the end of the evening, all Christian cow people, including the cow, agreed that the wisest thing to do was to do nothing. So that is what we did and we did it for weeks; pray and do nothing. Each day for the better part of a month you could visit the ranch and in the barnyard you would find a nice herd of white-faced cows feeding contentedly around the barn and one lone cow, happily chewing her cud, laying in the second story hayloft access window feeling a cut above everyone else in the world. (I have pictures.) Eventually she calved. With her girlish figure restored and with the help of a swift kick in the rear administered by a local cowboy named Shorty, she made it down the staircase to take her rightful place in the herd once again.

That decision to wait and do nothing but pray was a hard decision for all of us to make, especially for Elsa (for the cow, maybe not so much). For me it raised a question that has dogged me for years: What does it really mean to wait upon God? In this case we prayed, and we waited, and we did nothing. In fact, I felt guilty for not having a proactive solution up my sleeve as I came to the ranch house for church each week. Surely God should have given me one. I know I repeatedly asked Him for one, but nothing ever came. So I continued to wait; we continued to wait. The eventual outcome was nothing short of a deliriously happy one for cow, calf, Elsa and all of us. But each week as we waited for something to happen, I felt we really should have been more proactive; we really should have been doing something. Somehow it felt like we were derelict in our duties and letting the ranch and the cow down.

What does it mean to wait upon God? The biblical writers seem to use the phrase over and over again. Christian writers use the phrase repeatedly. We Christians frequently use the phrase in our dialogue with one another. But for me it is one thing to say the words; it is entirely another thing to do the words. I confess that when there are cows in my attic, waiting upon God alone for a solution goes against every Calvinist bone in my body that compels me to work and pray. The old work ethic is just too deeply engrained.

That being the case, the Bible is clear, whether it is done by choice or forced upon me by a particular situation, when I choose to trust myself and my needs totally to God's resources and not my own, I will not be disappointed (Isaiah 49:23b). God is never limited by my limitations. I have resolved to do more of this waiting upon God alone, not just when I am at the end of my own resources but by choice even when I have resources in myself. I have resolved to pray more and let things happen and to work less to make things happen. ■

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of several books.

When There's a Cow in Your Attic

WAIT AND PRAY.

BY DAVID WEBBER • ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY FALLS

"Do either of you have any idea of how to get a cow out of the attic?" exclaimed Elsa in her delightful German accent.

"Say what?" I said. Linda and I were barely in the door of the ranch house. We hadn't even kicked the snow off of our boots yet.

"I said, do either of you know how to get a cow out of the attic?" Elsa spoke slower this time but not a whole lot more calmly. She was obviously rattled and distraught. She was in her early 20s and taking care of the ranch while the owners were on an extended trip to Europe. She was feeling the full weight of the responsibility. What with all the livestock and the winter cold, daily there was a host of things that could go wrong. But a cow in the attic?

"How on earth did a cow get into your attic?" I said. By this time I had kicked off my boots and was wandering around the ranch house staring apprehensively up at the plasterboard ceiling. I was expecting a cow to drop in on us at any time.

"No! No! Not in this attic; upstairs in the barn."

"Oh, you mean the hayloft," Linda said.

continued on page 55

"Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." ... Then Jesus said, "Follow me!"

—JOHN 21:18, 19b

PHOTOGRAPH BY CONNIE

"Members of the congregation have become very isolated from the community around the church because they don't live here anymore. They probably drive past many churches to get here. So, while the church is still a reflection of what they found valuable and meaningful 40 or 50 years ago, the neighbourhood doesn't look the same. It isn't like them; it isn't interested in what they're doing; it doesn't come to their events and doesn't have any idea of what goes on inside these walls. So the community has this benign neglect of whatever goes on behind the walls of that building on the corner and the congregation has a suspicious, vaguely hostile reaction to the community."

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CAN WE DOUBT?

A CONVERSATION ABOUT UNCERTAINTIES

"The way of Jesus cannot be imposed or mapped—it requires an active participation in following Jesus as he leads us through sometimes strange and unfamiliar territory, in circumstances that become clear only in the hesitations and questionings, in the pauses and reflections where we engage in prayerful conversation with one another and with him."

—EUGENE H. PETERSON, THE JESUS WAY: A CONVERSATION ON THE WAYS THAT JESUS IS THE WAY

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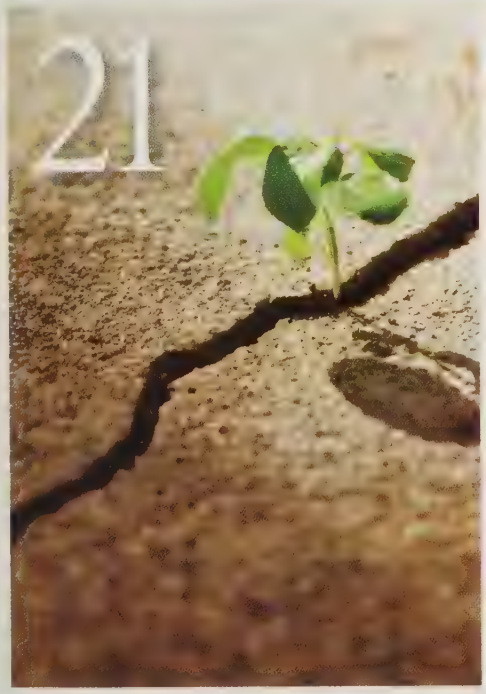

On the Cover:
Illustration by Katy Lemay

Desiring Faith

RELIGION ISN'T THE ISSUE AS MUCH AS THE INSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH. **BY DAVID HARRIS**

The interest in the papal election last month was quite extraordinary. It was curious to see the church and its mission analyzed so intently on the front pages of secular (and often anti-church) publications.

No doubt one reason was that a Canadian, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, was considered a frontrunner. But that alone hardly explains it.

Perhaps it has something to do with our need for heroes, for icons. And the pope, as leader of the largest denomination of Christians and the inheritor of the faith's oldest episcopal see, is nothing if not an icon.

Before I go further, let me be clear that I'm not suggesting the pope replaces Jesus as an icon for our faith. But humans need living icons. The Dalai Lama fills a similar role for many people.

Is it, I wonder, that as we make our way through life, with all its ups and downs, trials and joys, we look to certain people—perhaps to certain positions as much as anything—to help us measure where we are? To help us believe in our strength despite our weakness?

We are in a period of great religious upheaval. In the West, numbers of churchgoers are declining while the number of people interested in God and spirituality, and especially Christianity, remains fairly strong.

I think many people today would like to believe, or think they ought to believe, more strongly than they do about matters of faith.

In a high-profile religious leader such as this bishop who has inherited a church community historically grounded in the New Testament, it is easy to believe that this person represents the kind of robust faith many people would like to have.

Many people today think they ought to believe more strongly than they do about matters of faith

That's why I encourage you to read the excellent discussion in this issue between Tom Allen and Rev. Will Ingram moderated by the *Record's* Andrew Faiz. It dispenses with the notion that a strong belief without doubt is what defines real faith.

Real faith does have doubt. It always has. Many of the great saints, theologians, mystics and holy people have expressed how often doubt almost overwhelmed them.

And at least in the West, it will be crucial for Pope Francis to find ways to encourage discussion and debate around these questions for all Christians, not just Catholics.

And as we engage in these issues, perhaps we will find that they are less about doubt in God than about doubt in the church's teachings about God.

Harvey Cox, a Baptist minister and the former Harvard theologian, has put forward the theory that the last 50 years in the history of Christianity are the beginning of the Age of the Spirit.

He contrasts the current interest in spirituality and trying to find common ground with other faiths with the previous 1,700 years which were dominated by the church and its theologians focusing on defining dogmas (foundational beliefs) and doctrines (other teachings).

Cox has certainly put his finger on something. Much of the recent commentary on Roman Catholicism and the pope focused on the fact that most Western Roman Catholics simply ignore a number of the church's teachings concerning sexuality, for instance. But they are still drawn to the spiritual element of the faith.

That strikes me as no different than Presbyterians. We have noted for some time that the struggles and debates are really between those who are concerned with preserving the doctrines of the church and those who are more interested in discovering the activity of the Holy Spirit in the wider world.

These approaches are not so much opposed as just having a completely different focus and concern. The opposition that arises is in some sense accidental and perhaps that is why each side is so puzzling to the other. The most frequent question from either side is essentially: "How can they believe that?"

Perhaps the answer is simply to trust God and enter into the conversation. Because is it not in the Word that God is to be found? ■

David Harris is the Record's *editor and publisher. dharris@presbyterian.ca*

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Letters

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.
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Misleading Impression

Re Back Cover, March

On behalf of the people of St. Andrew's King Street, Toronto, we would like to express our disappointment with the back cover of the March edition of the *Record*. The photo of St. Andrew's, placed above a quotation describing a congregation which is disconnected, unengaged, irrelevant and hostile to the people in its wider community was quite offensive.

The congregation's mission statement is that "the people of St. Andrew's are called by God to serve in faith, hope and love in the heart of Toronto" and—for 183 years—the congregation has responded to the needs of its community, including the recent development of an ambitious plan to expand our ministries with the residential and business communities in our neighbourhood.

Presently, hundreds—and sometimes thousands—of people come to St. Andrew's on a weekly basis for worship services, educational seminars, Out of the Cold meals, midweek services, Bible study groups, musical events, large Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, to name only a few of our regular activities. The church sanctuary is open as a place of prayer during the day and we offer support and office space to the Boarding Homes Ministries, the 48th Highlanders Museum and weekly prayer groups made up of people who are not even part of our membership.

We commend the *Record* for exploring the challenges of ministry in modern Canadian cities, but were dismayed that the back cover conveys such a profoundly misleading impression about the life of St. Andrew's Church, Toronto.

REV. WILL INGRAM, SENIOR MINISTER
REV. DR. BOB FARIS, ASSOCIATE MINISTER
MS. LORI RANSOM, CLERK OF SESSION

If the back cover is meant as a joke or as an imaginative description of a typical inner city church, it is in extremely bad taste. The person ➤

who authorized its inclusion has no legitimate place on the staff of a reputable Christian magazine. If it were true, it would surely hasten the demise of a discouraged congregation.

Illustrating the statement is a picture of St. Andrew's King Street, Toronto. The damage done to that church by juxtaposing this statement and this picture may well be irreparable. Yet, the statement is simply not true.

I have been a Christian since the age of 11. I am now a senior citizen. Throughout the intervening years, I have regularly attended church. For the past seven years I have been a member of St. Andrew's.

It is one of the most vibrant and forward-looking congregations in which I have ever been a participant. Jesus Christ is faithfully preached and we are consistently called to examine and profess our calling in him in our daily lives. We are reminded that we are being built up within the congregation to reach outside the congregation. God is clearly blessing us as seen both in our own spiritual growth and in the numbers of neighbours who come to investigate and stay to join with us.

Of course we are not perfect and never will be in this life. But we are consciously "reaching toward the mark" and would value the support and not the thoughtless denigration of our denominational magazine.

OLIVE R. ANSTICE, TORONTO

The editor replies:
We apologize to the congregation of St. Andrew's for this embarrassing error. It was not our intention to pair the provocative quotation intended to nudge conversation with a photograph of St. Andrew's. But we managed it regardless. Please see Pop Christianity for a reflection on how this error occured.

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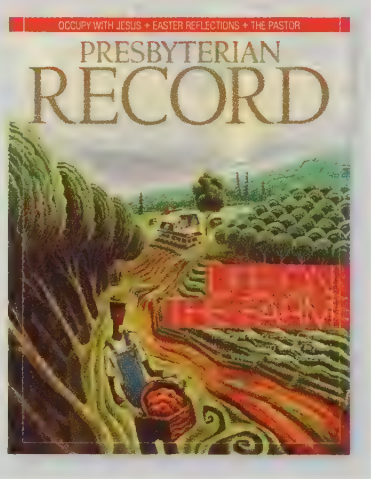

Diversity of Approaches

Re Witnessing the Message, March

It was interesting to read the interview with Rick Fee. He points to funds that are available and described on the website. Hopefully they will be well used. Among them is the Renewing Ministries Capital Fund, which is underused. There are some renewing congregations for which capital investment for building purposes brings about renewal of ministries and a revitalization of congregational life and mission. Those opportunities need to be proactively pursued for the building of the Kingdom of God. Investing capital in such congregations for building purposes is good stewardship of resources that have

been entrusted to the care of the Presbyterian Church in Canada for such purposes.

It is not the only way to help the church move forward. There are many other innovative methods that do not require buildings, but that again depends upon the context involved. Let's celebrate a great diversity of ministry approaches rather than trading one for another.

REV. DR. MARTIN KREPLIN, MONCTON, N.B.

Aha!

Re Serving Hospitality, March

Andrew Faiz's references to "sacrament" buoyed and inspired me. His supposition that the people of St. Andrew's, Sutton, Ont., could have done nothing was an "aha" moment. Thank you for writing.

MERLE HARSTONE, CALEDON, ONT.

Sheldon at Work

Re Beloved Professor and Writer Passes Away

One day early in his ministry, Sheldon MacKenzie and his ministerial assistant were walking through a tough section of Montreal when two hoods jumped them. Upon discovering their mistake, one said to Sheldon, "Ah, Father Mac. We didn't know it was you."

Without batting an eye, Sheldon replied, "An honest mistake. These things happen. How'd you guys like a cup of coffee?"

Well, within a couple of minutes the two hoods, Sheldon and the assistant were in a restaurant and the hands of the latter were shaking so badly he spilled his coffee. But Sheldon didn't see anything out of the ordinary. For him, it was a chance to witness to the gospel and the opportunity to add two potential members to his congregation. It was all in a day's work.

REV. ROD LAMB, KEEWATIN, ONT.

Support the Colleges

Re Future of Theological Colleges, March

I was moved by Dr. Stephen Farris's response. He says that new people will come to a congregation where there is a minister "of spiritual depth with wise leadership skills." I am blessed to be part of such a community up here in Penetanguishene, Ont. I urge the General Assembly to support our Presbyterian colleges so that they can continue to graduate leaders who are not only well educated and mature in their faith, but also well prepared for the challenges of leadership in this secular and very needy society.

Thanks both for listening and for challenging your readers.

DONNA DRAPKIN, TINY, ONT.

'The Way'

Re Word of God, February

Rev. John Fraser writes about "playing" with the word of God. Playing with the word of God is a great sin of the modern liberal church.

One example I can think of is the statement of Jesus, "I am the way, the truth and the life." You will hear a preacher talk about "the way of Jesus" suggesting that this is how we should look upon Jesus. Study how kind and loving he was. Live your life similarly and you will please God. Using the phrase "the way of Jesus" is a subtle play on Luke's words in Acts 18 where he tells us about Aquila and Priscilla taking Apollos under their wing and explaining to him "the way of God" more completely. Jesus saying that He is "the way" and Luke's writing in Acts about "the way of God" are two very different concepts of the word "way." Jesus is called the way because it is through him that believers find salvation. The way of God refers to the complete doctrine, or teaching of how to be saved and how to live your life after you're saved.

BARRIE FRASER,
EAST LAKE AINSLIE, N.S. ■

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Process Myopia

OUR APOLOGIES TO ST. ANDREW'S KING STREET, TORONTO. **BY ANDREW FAIZ**

Boy, did we mess up!

We had this challenging and provocative quotation from an interview we did for the March cover story. We used the quotation in the editorial. It paints a portrait of some churches in the city, which I think is a fair one. That they have somehow lost touch with their communities. Reading all of the interviews and preparing last month's issue, that quotation stayed with me. I can think of examples where that quotation is an accurate portrayal.

One place where it is not is St. Andrew's King Street, Toronto. It is a vibrant downtown church, with a long history and tradition of being engaged in its community and neighbourhood. (See Brian Stewart's article from the December 2005 issue of the *Record*.)

So, how did we end up pairing this vibrant institution with this provocative quotation? The embarrassing truth is, it was process myopia. We did this without realizing we did this.

My colleagues and I are not incompetents. We may be a small team, but we are highly focused, dedicated and professional. We spend a lot of time and care on the final details of each month's issue. We drop a few balls each month—a comma here, a misplaced quotation mark there—but we manage to successfully juggle a myriad of others. But this wasn't a mere dropped-ball error; this was a full-on failure.

We found a fantastic Toronto photograph in a stock image database. The original image is larger (landscape format) than the one printed (in a portrait format) of 'red rocket' streetcars on a city street. None of us on the team noticed St. Andrew's in the image. None of us.

To understand that we can unintentionally hurt, insult or alienate our neighbours and friends. But, more to understand we did it because we were so focused on other tasks

I realize it is hard to believe we wouldn't see it, once it has been pointed out. But we didn't. So, why didn't we?

We were so focused on other tasks we didn't catch the details within that image. It was a collective myopia brought on by the intense focus on process. We failed to see an obvious thing because we were focused on our own checklists.

Which brings us back to the quotation, worded as a question. Do you agree that churches can lose touch with their neighbourhoods? The quotation paints a portrait of people so focused on what is happening within the walls of their church building that they fail to keep pace with what is happening outside those walls. It suggests a form of myopia.

Within the context of the March issue, which paints several portraits of churches in the city (including St. Andrew's, presented as a church actively involved in its community) the quotation challenges us to consider the church's relationship with the city at its doorstep and beyond. The use of the quotation was meant to provoke; our failure to recognize the details of the matching photograph instead provoked an insult.

I am sorry and apologize to St. Andrew's for the March issue's back cover. I also extend the regret and apologies from my colleagues. We messed up. Big Time.

This is, in many ways, one of the hardest lessons to learn. (And, again, this is why we chose that quotation.) To understand that we can unintentionally hurt, insult or alienate our neighbours and friends. But, more to understand we did it because we were so focused on other tasks. Pride gets in the way; we claim the innocence of our intention without claiming the pain generated by our myopia.

With a different image—a generic city scene—and that quotation, we intended to be provocative. It backfired because of our failure. It's a hard way to learn a lesson. But, I'm not sure there has ever been an easy way. ■

Andrew Faiz is the Record*'s managing editor.*

Christians in Karachi, Pakistan, march against attacks on Christians, on March 9. Earlier in the day, thousands of protestors had set fire to more than 100 houses in a Christian area of Badami Bagh in Lahore. Authorities said the violence was spurred by allegations of blasphemy against Islam after a 28-year-old Christian man allegedly made derogatory comments about the Prophet Muhammad during a conversation with a Muslim friend. One hundred and fifty people were arrested following the incident.

WMS Announces New Award

WOMAN OF FAITH AWARD TO BE PRESENTED AT 2014 GATHERING. **BY SETH VEENSTRA**

THE WOMEN'S MISSIONARY Society plans to present a new award at next year's National Presbyterian Women's Gathering in Richmond Hill, Ont.

The Presbyterian Woman of Faith Award will be presented every three years starting at the women's gathering May 16-19, 2014. It will include a cash prize, although the amount has yet to be determined.

"The award will celebrate a woman's particular accomplishment or a lifetime of achievement. And it can be church related or community related," said Rev. Dr. Lynda Reid, a retired Christian education consultant and convener of the award committee. A nominee could be a layperson, elder, diaconal minister, or minister of word and sacraments in the Presbyterian Church, Reid added.

"There are so many accomplishments by women that go unnoticed. There's always that person who works diligently for years, but you don't necessarily hear about it," said Reid.

"I've spoken to so many women who say, 'Oh, this is just something I do.' They're not always aware of their contributions to the community. We hope to raise their profile."

The WMS is calling for nominations endorsed by an official church body, whether it is a session, presbytery, synod or WMS group. Nomination forms should be available on wmspcc.ca or womensgathering.ca in April. They are due by Nov. 30.

Individuals or groups may also contribute toward the cash award.

After reviewing nominations in the fall, an awards committee plans to announce the winner in early 2014. ■

Community News

Women and men pray together at the Noor Cultural Centre and Mosque, Toronto.

Pastor speaks at Mosque

THE NOOR CULTURAL CENTRE and Mosque invited Rev. Dr. Harris Athanasiadis, minister at St. Mark's, Toronto, to be the guest speaker at a Friday service on March 22.

"The people from Noor have a real respect for authentic Christianity," said Athanasiadis. "The centre is a place for people who are looking for a more progressive approach to Islam. It's run primarily by women, with a rotating roll of imams who come in and do the preaching.

"I'll be talking about the idea of God being human; which is often perceived as weakness. The idea of God suffering on the cross is strange to many people.

"After I'm done, an imam will respond creatively, building on the ideas I present," Athanasiadis told the *Record* prior to the event.

The event was part of an ongoing interfaith dialogue between St. Mark's and Noor, both located in the Don Mills neighbourhood. The previous week, members of Noor visited St. Mark's to present the basics of Islam to the congregation, followed by a question and answer period and a time of fellowship.

"My agenda is to help my people actually meet Muslims who are serious about their faith, who are open and gracious people.

"Interfaith dialogue is a creative and meaningful way to develop understanding of our own faith as Christians. The more we have relationships with other people and take their faiths seriously, the more we're inspired to really understand our own much better." ■ —*SV*

VST Ends State of Financial Exigency

IN FEBRUARY, the Vancouver School of Theology ended its state of financial exigency, a step it took last year in order to make some deep cuts to its operating expenses.

According to the Association of Theological Schools' guidelines, "Financial exigency is declared when an institution needs to take extraordinary action to reduce expenditures and preserve resources."

Such steps can include laying off tenured professors, something which cannot be done under normal circumstances.

"We've cut the deficit in half," said Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris, acting principal of VST. He said cost-cutting steps have included, among other things, laying off one tenured professor and eliminating a number of staff positions.

"[The deficit] is still too high," he said. "There are some things still to be done. But we're not in crisis anymore. We have a very smart group of people working on financial sustainability. We're going to come out of this just fine."

VST declared a state of financial exigency on Jan. 4, 2012. The board cited low investment returns and reductions in funding from the United and Anglican churches as reasons for its financial struggles.

St. Andrew's Hall, a Presbyterian college that exercises its charter through VST, is in "good financial

shape," said Farris, who also serves as the college's dean. It is administered by its own board of directors. It supports VST with an annual grant and shares the professors it employs. ■ —*Connie Wardle*

CCC Welcomes Office of Religious Freedom

THE CANADIAN COUNCIL of Churches has congratulated Stephen Harper on the establishment of an Office of Religious Freedom and the appointment of its first ambassador.

In a letter to the prime minister dated Feb. 26, Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton, the organization's general secretary, said the CCC "welcomes and looks forward to co-operating" with the new office in "its stated mandate to protect and advocate on behalf of religious minorities under threat, opposing religious hatred and intolerance, and promoting pluralism abroad."

The CCC represents 25 denominations including the Presbyterian Church.

"The Canadian Council of Churches works closely with representative bodies of other faith communities in Canada," the letter says. This includes involvement with the Canadian Interfaith Conversation, "whose charter vision is to be an advocate for religion in a pluralistic society and in Canadian public life, promoting harmony and spiritual insight among religions and religious communities in Canada.

"We believe that our depth, breadth and expertise make us a very important component of future consultations and announcements regarding the Office of Religious Freedom."

The office, which is part of the Foreign Affairs department, officially opened on Feb. 19. According to the government, it is intended to "speak out against egregious violations

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College Convocations

Vancouver School of Theology
DATE AND TIME: May 6 at 7 p.m.
LOCATION: Kerrisdale Presbyterian Church, Vancouver
CONVOCATION SPEAKER: Most Rev. John Privett, Anglican Bishop of Kootenay and Archbishop of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia and Yukon
RECIPIENT OF HONORARY DOCTORATE OF DIVINITY DEGREE: To be announced.

Knox College, Toronto
DATE AND TIME: May 8 at 7:30 p.m.
LOCATION: Convocation Hall, University of Toronto
CONVOCATION SPEAKER: Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, professor of Old Testament studies at the Vancouver School of Theology
NO HONORARY DOCTORATE of divinity degree will be awarded this year.

Presbyterian College, Montreal
DATE AND TIME: May 9 at 7:30 p.m.
LOCATION: Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, Montreal
CONVOCATION SPEAKER: Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency
RECIPIENTS OF HONORARY DOCTORATE OF DIVINITY DEGREES: Rev. D. Laurence Mawhinney and Rev. Henry L. Hildebrandt

of freedom of religion, denounce violence against human-rights defenders and condemn attacks on worshippers and places of worship around the world." It has an annual budget of $5 million.

Its first ambassador is Andrew Bennett, a Catholic and the former dean of Augustine College, a private Christian college in Ottawa. ■—*CW*

Posted first to South Africa, Dr. Livingstone became fascinated by the continent. After a few brief expeditions he began to explore it in earnest

Livingstone Celebrated

TWO HUNDRED YEARS after the birth of 19th-century explorer, missionary and anti-slavery activist Dr. David Livingstone, events around the world celebrated his life and work.

The majority of the bicentennial events were held in Great Britain and countries in southern Africa, like Zambia and Malawi.

"He's celebrated in most places in the Western world, but his legacy is still relatively unknown in Canada," said David Livingstone, the namesake's great-great-nephew, a retired elementary school principal originally from Listowel, Ont.

David Livingstone was born March 19, 1813, in Blantyre, Scotland, to a lower class family. As a 10-year-old, Livingstone laboured 14 hours a day in the Blantyre Cotton Works before spending two hours attending to his school work.

His strong work ethic served him well. He went on to study science and medicine, eventually combining his love of science and faith to become a medical missionary at the age of 27.

Posted first to South Africa, Dr. Livingstone became fascinated by the continent. After a few brief expeditions he began to explore it in earnest. He walked coast-to-coast mapping the land, charting its natural life and learning languages along the way. (It's estimated that in the 30 years he lived in Africa he traveled more than 46,000 km throughout the continent, most of it on foot.) More interested in getting to know the land and its people than spending his time proselytizing, he was eventually fired by the missionary society.

While travelling, he saw firsthand the damage the slave trade brought to Africa. He began to campaign against slavery and seek ways to bring legitimate trade to the countries there.

"He treated Africans with respect, care and kindness. For many there, he was the first white person to behave differently toward them. He was very influential in stopping the slave trade in Africa," said Livingstone.

He remains beloved in many of the African countries he explored. After gaining their independence from colonial rule, many countries began changing street names from the ones given by European colonizers. Yet, as his great-great-nephew discovered, streets named after Livingstone remained unchanged.

"His legacy, whether it be his fight to end the evil slave trade, the kindness and affection he showed to the African people, or the perseverance he showed in his quest to open the countries to civilization is quite remarkable," he wrote in an email to the *Record*.

"It's not surprising that 150 years ago he was literally the most famous person in the western world." ■—*SV*

Christian Style

WITH SOME COMEDY FOR KICKS. **BY BRAD CHILDS**

The website c28.com sells T-shirts with 'Christianized' pop culture slogans.

CLOTHES

Many years ago, I became more than a little annoyed with the way Christian clothing companies trampled all over logos and copyrighted images to create Christianized versions of them in the name of evangelism. If you aren't aware, this is a really big business. People sell AC/DC shirts that say JC/DC (Jesus Christ Demon Crusher) or altered Starbucks logos with Christian messages on them. When I was writing for an underground Christian satirical paper, we became so annoyed with this type of thing that we wrote an article called "Wear Your Faith Where It Counts," with a picture of a lady wearing a Jesus bikini. Today I'll say that I've softened a bit on this issue (depending on the content). While they have a lot of stuff I don't like, c28.com (which stands for Colossians 2:8) does sell a few things that I do like, namely onesies for babies. They have one that says, "I stroll with Jesus" on it and another that says, "When God made me He was just showing off." I'd put my baby in that. Oh, and they share the profits with organizations like Mercy Ships which brings free medical assistance to places in need worldwide.

FIND IT @ **c28.com**

COMEDY

Chonda Pierce is a Christian comedian. She covers medication, depression, rehab, menopause, and a whole host of other things. She is seriously funny and makes powerful statements, too. I won't say any more. I don't want to ruin the jokes so I'll let Chonda speak for herself.

FIND IT @ **Search YouTube for Chonda Pierce**

TATTOOS

Christian Tattoos is an interesting website. Much of the site is dedicated to the practice of covering up tattoos people got before they came to faith in Christ. Many other tattoos on the site are ones Christians got after they became Christians. The site has discussion groups and advice, and it also allows people to post pictures of their body art. There is a great video at the head of the homepage titled, "What does the Bible say about tattoos?" On the site, I was struck by the sheer growth of talent in the medium. Although there are still a lot of Christian "flash" pieces (those simple designs artists hang on the wall), there are also a lot of photorealist pieces and creative originals.

FIND IT @ **christian-tattoos.com**

MUSIC

George Dennehy is 19. He was born in Romania and was adopted into a very large family living in the United States. A while back he made a big splash on YouTube for his rendition of the 1998 mega hit *Iris* by the Goo Goo Dolls. George made such a big splash, in fact, that he was even invited to a recent Goo Goo Dools tour where he played and sang that song with the band. In the tour video you can distinctly see he's wearing a shirt that reads, "intelligently created." Dennehy of course did this on purpose. He is a devoted Christian and wouldn't dream of being on such a big stage without pointing the spotlight back on God. He's a pretty talented guy and is even putting out some original music now. Most of his music is done on the guitar but he also plays bass, cello and a bit of piano. Oh yeah, and because he was born with no arms he does it all with his feet. George says he doesn't know exactly what the future holds but he does believe it will be good because all you have to do is "have faith and watch His plan unfold for you."

FIND IT @ **georgedennehy.com**

Rev. Brad Childs is minister at First, Regina.

Walking With God

AND SHARING IDEAS IN THE PRESBYTERY OF SEAWAY-GLENGARRY. **BY CONNIE WARDLE**

The Presbyterians of North Dundas share (and wear) their winning ministry idea. They plan to do everything by FROG (Fully Relying On God).

The event was a success. On Sept. 29, 2012, 90 participants from almost every pastoral charge in the presbytery came together to share how they planned to walk with God in their communities. "It was probably the biggest presbytery event we've ever had," said Donna McIlveen, a member of the planning team.

But it didn't start out successfully. The team originally planned to hold the event in the spring of 2012. "We shared the idea at presbytery and it kind of fell flat," she admitted.

The team had two choices: they could forget about the idea or they could work on it further.

"We thought, maybe we're not sharing the excitement we got from the Emmaus conference," said McIlveen, who attended the national event with other presbytery delegates in 2010. "We retooled the event and didn't let the project die. We set the date for the fall of 2012. We were more intentional about it. We prayed more about it. The spark caught, the Spirit moved more among people at the presbytery meeting, and the idea seemed to take off."

It was a simple idea. Congregations and pastoral charges created teams; there were no requirements when it came to membership or size. Each team met together, looked at their church's context and community, and came up with an idea of how they could walk with God in their neighbourhood. Then they shared their plans at a event facilitated by Rev. Ian McDonald, associate secretary of Canadian Ministries.

The presbytery offered a $1,000 prize to the team whose idea received the most votes from the participants.

"We said from the beginning the ideas didn't need to be splashy," McIlveen said. "Sometimes we just need to be intentional, recognizing opportunities and acting on them."

Congregations brought ideas like offering ukulele lessons in a partnership with an elementary school, creating stand-alone events for children throughout the year, working with seniors, creating a pastoral care course, and offering "free food, fellowship and faith."

The $1,000 prize went to the Presbyterians of North Dundas (or POND) who, as "FROGs" ("Fully Relying On God"), intend to engage with their community in simple, practical, everyday ways. They presented their ideas in a rap song while sporting felt lilypads and little frogs on their heads.

"They were going to be prayerful about everything they did, seek God's guidance, look to God for direction in the North Dundas community," McIlveen said. "What really came through was that they were going to be more present with people."

An article Donna McIlveen and Rev. Mark Tremblay wrote for the January 2012 issue of the *Presbyterian Record* also "played into the planning team," she said. The event theme, Walking with God in the Neighbourhood, "summarizes our role as a sent people who are to be engaged in all of life—not just on Sunday morning when we open the doors of the church. Just because people aren't coming to church doesn't mean God's not at work in their lives. Walking with God is a movement. It's not static. It involves the whole body.

"It was great to see congregations come together and work together and build on each other's strengths. As the event was wrapping up it came through loud and clear: we need to do this more often." ■

Connie Wardle is the Record's *senior staff writer.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF DONNA MCILVEEN

Meeting or Partying?

A HOUSE CHURCH MINISTRY HAS FUN WITH THEIR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

BY SHANNON BELL-WYMINGA

Members socialize at the House Church Rendezvous.

What is the purpose of a congregation's annual general meeting? Isn't it to reflect on what God has been doing among us through the previous year and plan for the coming year? It is necessary to vote on a budget and a few other pressing concerns, but mostly it's to celebrate the mission and ministry of our congregations.

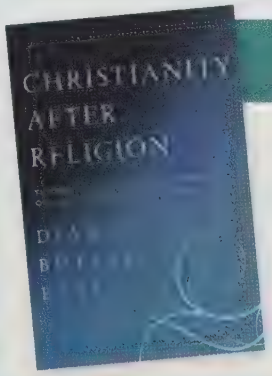
In the Cariboo, we are one congregation dispersed in house churches across a vast geographic area. All our major decisions (such as the annual budget or calling new ministry personnel) must be done by printed ballot. So the session approved the questions to be put to the congregation. There were two this year. Then we planned a party.

It was our third annual House Church Rendezvous. We set aside the larger part of a day in February, borrowed a church building and invited all the folks from each of our house churches. Before the rendezvous, ballots for the two decisions were distributed and people were able to bring their ballots with them or pass them on through the pastors.

People from almost every ministry point gathered for an afternoon. Folks shared their gifts on stage through songs, skits, poetry and stories for the entertainment and encouragement of us all. Our elders and volunteers were thanked with small gifts. ➤

ATTENTION: NANCY
(Previously lived in Richmond Hill, ON)

If the name **James Murray** means something to you, please contact Valerie at 416-518-5402 or valeriemharris@hotmail.com. Not an urgent matter.



The Synod of the Atlantic Provinces is hosting a Continuing Education Event featuring,

Diana Butler Bass who will be speaking on the topic, *Christianity after Religion: the 3Bs of Faith: Belief, Behaviour, and Belonging*

Sept. 27-29, 2013
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PHOTO COURTESY OF SHANNON BELL-WYMINGA

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Dinner time was loaded with laughter and conversation, bringing people together who belonged to different house churches

A missionary family about to go out from amongst us gave a report of their work.

It was followed by a time of visiting, which included games to get people mixing and meeting one another. All the annual reports from each area of ministry were set up on walls and tables so everyone could see what God had been doing among us through the year. The annual report newsletter was available for people to take home.

Eating is always essential to any party. We had a wonderful potluck dinner in small table groups. There were rules for the tables: no one could sit with more than one other person from their house church so that the table groups were a real mix of people from across the region. Table groups could accumulate points for their variety of ages, distances travelled, knowledge about the ministry and other house church trivia. The tables with the highest scores shared gift baskets of prizes. At the tables there were also strange and humorous photos taken throughout the history of the Cariboo mission; table groups were invited to make up a story about the pictures. Dinner time was loaded with laughter and conversation, bringing together people who belonged to different house churches and, though technically in the same congregation, had never met face to face before.

Our wonderful day finished with worship led by a band made up of musicians from three different house churches. We all left sated by fellowship, great food, uplifting worship and the encouragement of seeing what God had done among us and through us through the year. Jesus loved a good party and we never hear of him going to a meeting run by Robert's Rules of Order. Why not turn your AGM into an ACP (an annual church party)? ■

Rev. Shannon Bell-Wyminga is a member of the Cariboo House Church ministry team.

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Theology 101

ISTOCKPHOTO

OUR FEATURE ON LIVING FAITH

Living Faith is a declaration of faith of the Presbyterian Church. You can download it at presbyterian.ca. We suggest you read the passage being discussed each month.

ADDITIONAL READING: How to Read the Holy Bible (June 2009) and God Spoke to Me (April 2010). The articles can be found at presbyterianrecord.ca.

Reading the Bible

INTEGRATING THE AUTHOR WITH THE READER. **BY DORCAS GORDON**

LIVING FAITH 5 (THE BIBLE)

Given the centrality of the Bible for Presbyterians, we need continually to discuss and clarify how we understand its significance for our belief and practice. How do we interpret *Living Faith*'s affirmations about the Bible, that the Bible is "given to us by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life?" How do we distinguish between the Bible as the word of God and Jesus Christ as the living Word of God? Certainly, the centrality of the Bible as the standard for all doctrine is not in question nor is *Living Faith*'s claim that it is the way in which "we test any word that comes to us from church, world or inner experience."

THE LIVING WORD OF GOD: JESUS CHRIST

Living Faith reminds us of the important relationship between the Bible as the word ➤

Living Faith seeks to balance an emphasis on biblical inspiration and a reliance on the Holy Spirit with the fact of the embodied historical contexts within which the Old and New Testaments were written

of God and Jesus Christ as the living Word of God. Where the word 'word' is capitalized or not is an important aspect of our understanding. The words of the Bible bear witness to the living Word, Jesus Christ; it is to him and not to the words of the Bible that the church is bound. Semantics—no, rather a profound truth that the scriptures are primary in terms of being "necessary, sufficient and reliable revealing Jesus Christ, the living Word."

Yet scripture is not monolingual. The four gospels, not to mention the letters of Paul and the writings that come from the second and third generation church, reveal Jesus Christ, the living Word in somewhat different ways. In effect, we, as present-day readers, removed in context and time from them, are invited into their theological conversation in which we hear the questions each community is asking as it proclaims and lives out the mystery of divinity and incarnation. We hear their voices within these different contexts, voices asking different questions even as they experience different anxieties.

READING THE BIBLE IN TWO CONTEXTS

Living Faith puts it in this way: "The writing of the Bible was conditioned by the language, thought, and setting of its time. The Bible must be read in its historical context." (5.4) This is an important concept for interpreting the Bible faithfully in our own time. Sometimes I think we not only neglect this but also forget that we too live in a historical context and that what we see in the Bible is interpreted through the lens of our culture, history, worldview and values. In other words our statement of belief about the Bible requires us to inhabit two worlds at the same time.

First we need to understand the biblical texts in their own context. To read the Bible in its historical context requires us to take seriously what it meant to live in a first-century Mediterranean world with its codes of honour/shame and dyadic (communal) personality, not to mention political and economic systems foreign to us, (the empire of Rome with its patriarchal family and patron-client economic systems), framing and informing the biblical worldview. Further, as anyone who is multilingual knows, language is culturally driven, reminding us that when we read the Bible on a daily or weekly basis it is already in translation, removed from its original cultural and linguistic context (the Greek or Hebrew languages).

To inhabit the second world means "relying on the Holy Spirit" to "seek the application of God's word for our time." Too often this leads us to beat each other up, each of us claiming to having greater access to the Holy Spirit than those with whom we disagree. It can also prevent us from engaging in the harder work of discerning together the application of God's word in our particular historical context.

How often do we think to ask how our cultural values, presuppositions or self-understandings might be getting in the way of greater discernment?

One example that has led to deeper theological reflection among our students occurred at the May 2011 Knox Convocation. Dr. Reinerio Arce, in his convocation address, challenged our students to think about unexamined assumptions in light of what they lead us to see and not see in our practice of ministry. The main thing he challenged was the North American assumption that "politics and religion don't mix." His premise, given his Cuban historical context, was that "not to be political is to be political." In my teaching I observe that students find it difficult to critique at a deep level our societal context with its systems of meaning and values that operate often unconsciously both outside and within the church, meanings and values that not only impact how we interpret the Bible, but also how we live our Christian witness.

Living Faith seeks to balance an emphasis on biblical inspiration and a reliance on the Holy Spirit with the fact of the embodied historical contexts within which the Old and New Testaments were written. This should lead us as Presbyterian people in a western, North American, 21st-century context to claim truth with humility, ever mindful that our finiteness allows us to see only in part. *Living Faith* as a statement of Christian belief seeks a balance. Because both the biblical text and we, its present-day readers, live in particular and distinct historical contexts, we are called to name the finiteness of all interpretations of the biblical text, while at the same time affirming that without the presence of the Holy Spirit any semblance of truthful interpretation eludes us.

Interpreting the biblical text is an awesome responsibility because of its centrality to how we conceive and live faithfully as disciples of the living Word in our own time. May our common calling to this holy task continue. ■

Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon is principal of Knox College, Toronto. A longer version of this article appears online.

ISTOCK PHOTO

Unlikely Apostles

JESUS CALLS THE LEAST LIKELY PEOPLE TO LEAD THE MOST IMPORTANT MISSION.

BY LAURENCE DEWOLFE

Third Sunday of Easter, April 14, 2013

Acts 9:1-20; John 21:1-19

When did you last hear, or preach, a sermon on a story from the Acts of the Apostles? Other than on Pentecost? We don't know what to do with these stories. Maybe the wildness of the Spirit and the confidence of the apostles trouble us. We don't hear God's voice, or see signs and wonders every day, like the apostles did.

This month we have a chance to rediscover the Acts. The book tells of the three most important men in the first decades of church history: Peter, James and Paul. The lectionary doesn't introduce us to James this year and the book has the least to say about him. But his role among the first generation of disciples, in Jerusalem, is crucial. There would be no Peter and no Paul without James. Today's readings tell us of the redemption of Paul (Acts 9) and the rehabilitation of Peter (John 21). Jesus puts the future of his flock in the hands of one man who has denied being part of that flock and another who has dedicated himself to wiping it out.

In both stories Jesus is clear. He and his flock are one. In the gospel he asks Simon Peter, "Do you love me?" He challenges Simon Peter to confess his love three times, to erase his three denials. Each time Jesus commands Simon Peter to care for his sheep. That's how he will go on loving Jesus.

Jesus meets Saul, later called Paul, on the road. Saul discovers Jesus is, indeed, alive and aware of what Saul is doing. What Saul does to the flock, he does to Jesus. Jesus has a plan for Saul, though he doesn't reveal it right away. Jesus speaks to Saul later, through the very flock Saul has sought to silence and scatter. ➤

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If we're troubled by the wildness of the Spirit and confidence of the apostles, the sheer gall of Jesus will really bother us. How dare Jesus choose Simon and make him the Rock of the church? There are 10 other men more qualified, men who didn't betray him. Jesus said Thomas's faith was best. Why not him? How dare Jesus forgive a man who disowned him in his darkest hour?

How dare Jesus choose Saul to carry the Good News to the Gentiles? To carry the church into the world? How dare he make the church's sworn enemy his own special envoy?

Who better to send out to turn the world upside down than two who have been turned upside down, inside out, and right way 'round themselves?

Jesus didn't have to make Saul into Paul, a new man out of whole cloth. He may have been called Paul in his youth in Hellenized territory, reverting to his Hebrew name when he went to Jerusalem to begin rabbinical study. He carried a Roman passport. Saul was from Tarsus, a busy cultural crossroad, a centre of commerce and communication. To say he was from Tarsus was to say he knew all the latest philosophical trends and could argue anyone not from Tarsus under the table. Saul went to Jerusalem and attached himself to the best teachers. He got to know tradition backwards and forwards. His heart caught fire when he first found out about Jesus and his little band of followers. Jesus just had to turn the heat in the right direction.

Simon from Galilee and Saul of Tarsus, aka Peter the Rock and Paul of the Gentile World, were hotheaded, hot-hearted men. At times, passion got the better of them. But Jesus got the best from them. Each was a work in progress for the rest of his life. Paul's letters are records of work that was still in progress when he died. Founded in his deep knowledge of old and new thought. Experiments that still leave us with unresolved questions. Yet strong foundations for us as we follow in their footsteps. ■

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe is on sabbatical from Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

ISTOCK PHOTO

A Different Kind of Strength

A VISION FOR THE CHURCH, PART ONE. **BY HARRIS ATHANASIADIS**

If we follow the statistics for the past several decades—of the numbers of members, worshippers, youth, children, churches—it would seem the Presbyterian Church in Canada is dying. This has been the source—not only in the PCC but the church at large—of many studies and reports, and there's a great deal of anxiety about it. But, perhaps there is something to be gained through our journey toward death. This is what I'd like to explore.

If we follow the narrative of scripture, we are challenged to believe and then think through the crazy idea that there can be new life through our dying; perhaps even a better life. It's called resurrection life. The apostle Paul, for one, is quite clear that the new life is even better than the old. He proclaims that the journey through death can be transforming in ways we could never imagine or bring about without the dying. How so? ➤

New visions don't come from sitting around talking about them from a place of comfort. Rather, they come when challenges press in upon us and we're backed into a corner

THE OLD VISION

Let us begin with the popular view of how to think and do church successfully. For the past 1,700 years or so, we have equated numbers with success. The more people in the pews, the more God's providence and blessing is with us. Somehow if we have larger and larger numbers of people who also bring money, we presume it must be the Spirit's work and therefore God is smiling upon us. If we're not increasing this way, then we presume we are dying and God's Spirit is not working among us. Unless we grow and grow quantitatively, we cannot be "viable," "successful" or "healthy."

And we cannot shake this sort of thinking: whether we think of other parts of the world where Christianity is booming, or our part of the world where megachurch or "ethnic" church numbers can seem so awe-inspiring, the vision is more or less the same. Quantitative growth is seen as a sign that God is working. And unless this is happening, we cannot imagine serious success, health or viability for our churches. Thus, we focus on worship styles, musical styles and programs designed to draw in spiritual consumers who will not only attend but commit their resources so we can grow bigger and more financially secure.

Such a vision of success in one form or another has been around since the time Christianity became the biggest religious show in town (from the fourth century onward). With large grants of real estate, official recognition (which also meant prohibiting the alternatives) and lots of money, Christianity triumphed over all other competitors to become the dominant religion of the growing Roman empire that spread across Europe and, through colonization, across the world.

Now, there have also been times of persecution, ascetic discipline and poverty in desert and monastery, missionary struggle and even martyrdom over the past 2,000 years we've been church. But the dominant way of interpreting such suffering and death has been like Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ*, as "heroic." Persecuted martyrs, ascetic saints and missionary heroes and heroines of the faith can fuel church triumphalism as much as large, new cathedrals and the enthusiasm of masses of people with lots of money. We need heroes and heroines in one form or another because they energize and inspire us to fight and win.

Our North American church's version of triumphalism today may be different on the surface than the Christendom of the past, but not in theology. Unlike our European and colonial past, we separate church and state, respect the free choice of individuals in matters of faith and accept that we are not the only religious show in town. We have to compete in a new way in order to win. But winning still looks the same. We know what we must do to be viable. We have to grow, grow, grow. And growth may be about many things, but without new members who bring lots of money, it's pretty empty in the end. We have given in to the very temptations Jesus resisted for himself in the wilderness (Matthew 4). We have got Paul and the New Testament idea of church totally wrong.

A NEW VISION

New visions don't come from sitting around talking about them from a place of comfort. Rather, they come when challenges press in upon us and we're backed into a corner. If we're not stuck in demoralization, panic or denial, a new vision may be born. Paul had many challenges press in upon him. The churches he was responsible for were not always spiritually healthy. They struggled with division, spiritual competitiveness, exclusion, elitism and moral disorder. On top of that Paul had to deal with other leaders in the church who questioned his authority and status as an apostle. The two letters to the church in Corinth are a perfect example of this.

The Corinthian church was a success as far as statistics were concerned. But according to the apostle, their way of life as a community was deeply flawed for all their quantitative success. In fact, their whole focus on success, and the kind of success patterned after the world around them, was the biggest obstacle to being a true church of Jesus Christ. The Corinthians were captivated by the desire to increase their status among each other and this led to competitiveness and elitism. They were hungry for importance and significance. They wanted to be heroic and triumphant. This came out in all kinds of ways and the net result was a failure to love each other, especially those who did not promote their social status and success within the community. This is the very focus of Paul's famous hymn to love in 1 Corinthians 13.

Psychologically, this hunger to be successful may be due to the circumstances out of which many of the Corinthian Christians emerged. Paul reminds them in the opening chapter of the first letter that "not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth." But given their hunger to measure up to worldly standards of success, status and triumph, they

even turn against Paul. By the second letter the Corinthians seem to have outgrown him because they feel he is not as shining and spectacular a leader as they hoped he would be, whereas other leaders seem to outperform him in charisma and style.

Instead of boasting his credentials, however, Paul's very vantage point of humiliation opens him up to discern a deeper revelation in the humiliation of Christ crucified as the glory of God. "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are ..." (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). It is not their success that makes them blessed by God, but the crucified peasant they worship that gives them their true life. He is their "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption" (v.30). To the world such an idea is the height of lunacy, foolishness and the biggest of stumbling blocks to attracting the powerful and successful into Christian community.

If powerful and successful people want to join the church and be part of it because it's the popular, hip, cool place to be, maybe something is wrong. Only when we encounter Christ as a judgment of the world's glory, in the church or elsewhere, can we trust that the God we worship is the God revealed in the crucified peasant from Nazareth. He is risen, yes, but risen to a glory very different than what the world knows and appreciates. He is risen to the glory of servant love, not self-expanding love.

According to Paul, this message is not just for the church. It is a message for Paul himself. He responds to the "super-apostles" (referred to in 2 Corinthians) who challenge his leadership gifts and charismatic ability by referring to his weakness. Whatever Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was about (2 Corinthians 12:7), it made him look and feel weak. But suffering this humiliation opened him up to a different kind of strength. It inspired him to boast not in himself (since he was discredited in the eyes of many according to social standards of success), but in the power of God to transfigure weakness into a different kind of strength.

Such strength hidden beneath apparent weakness revealed a different, richly authentic quality of love, a capacity to build bridges between great divides among people, a capacity to inspire genuine non-competitive communion. Such communion is rooted in a recognition and trust that God is the energy and source of our life, not our own human gifts, ingenuity, creativity, techniques or intelligence. As long as the world sees the church as a failure, the church has a chance to be a real success from God's point of view. Once the world dictates the terms for success, God is sidelined, at least the God revealed on a bloody cross. This is Paul's conviction.

The apostle challenges us with the idea that if we preach the true gospel, the gospel of a crucified peasant who is a "stumbling block" and "foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23) rejected by the glitz and glitter of our world, it's not going to be the kind of message that will be attractive to the powerful and successful of our world.

The first step toward a new vision for our church, then, is to purge ourselves of our desire to be successful, influential or significant. Only then will the door open to a different kind of strength, authenticity and identity: as spiritual members of the crucified peasant from Nazareth, risen to rule with a mysterious, sovereign strength hidden beneath what the world sees as weakness and failure—dying. ■

Rev. Dr. Harris Athanasiadis is minister at St. Mark's, Toronto. This is the first of two parts; next month will focus on Jesus's vision of Christian community.

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Hope and Help

EVERGREEN TRANSFORMS LIVES. **BY LAURIE WATT**

On a tough strip of Yonge Street near a series of adult entertainment parlours, Maria found her way out of a lifestyle filled with uncertainty, street drugs and prostitution.

She had walked past Evergreen—a ministry within the Yonge Street Mission, which is supported by the Presbyterian Church—many times.

One day, she walked in.

She found hope, help and the way to new life.

"I came in one day. It was so welcoming," she said of the open space filled not only with natural light, but with the light of those who bring Christ's message to the burdened youth who have turned to live on the streets—or just off of them—in downtown Toronto.

The Yonge Street Mission, an independent Christian charity, began in 1896 as a gospel wagon. This was a way to reach those in need with God's good news, grace and goodness as staff and volunteers sought to help them turn their lives around. As Toronto has grown and changed, so have the needs of its poor and marginalized people. In 1962, the youth centre opened.

The 1970s were an era of growth for the youth centre. The leading edge of the baby boomers and those attracted to an alternative lifestyle, with its drugs and sex, found themselves flocking to the bright lights of downtown Toronto. The centre began as a way to help them find jobs. In 1979, it was renamed Evergreen. The recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s hit and many young people saw opportunity evaporate.

Evergreen expanded to meet the needs of teens and young adults who had looked to eke out a living on the streets.

At 13, Maria became a ward of the state. The Children's Aid Society didn't give her what she needed to thrive. "When I first was taken away from my family, I was running away.

PHOTOS BY LAURIE WATT

I was scared. I had seen things I'd never seen before. I saw needles, people doing drugs," she recalled.

"It's hard to adjust and adapt when you're in a group of strangers."

She ran from foster home to foster home. At 17, she moved out and found a shelter in Parkdale, then her own apartment in the notorious Jane and Finch area.

The years of fighting to survive without her emotional needs being met translated into mental health issues.

"I stopped taking my medication. I got involved with the wrong people. I got into substance abuse. I was forced into prostitution."

Evergreen offered her sanctuary.

A series of murals made the message even clearer. "Hope. Peace. Joy. Love."

Its humble doors opened onto the neighbourhood she knew, but those doors also opened to a bright space, filled with light. Its walls showcased art other teens had made and, of course, there were tables where she could be nourished—whether with a hot lunch or dinner with someone who listened, who truly wanted to hear her story and help her write a different ending.

The 25 staff and more than 60 volunteers—from the art therapy leaders to the clinic co-ordinator and a registered nurse, to executive director Gail Meats—opened their hearts and their minds to help her.

The warm welcome starts with a hot meal and some friendly conversation as staff encourage first-timers and regulars to share what's going on in their lives. They help each one find the services that would help them, whether it's an art therapy group, a young parents' program, a visit to the health clinic or a more specialized program to deal with getting out of the sex trade.

"We see our role as being hope carriers. When they struggle to be hopeful, we carry their hope," said Meats.

Evergreen's street front.

"Kids say they come to Evergreen because it's where they're loved unconditionally, where staff treat them as a whole person. They may want to talk about spiritual things or tell us about their struggles. Evergreen is a place of rest, safety, away from the violence of their lives."

It also recognizes they may have been missing out on the fun many Canadian teens and young adults take for granted. "We'll have picnics and take them to the Ontario Science Centre and Toronto Island," said Meats.

Some may want to return to school and Evergreen helps them find their way academically and socially, to get on a new track to enjoying their high school years and then onto graduation. Evergreen offers tutoring and educational and job counselling. It partners with George Brown College, Ryerson University and the University of Toronto, to find new pathways for the youth who have been excluded, to give them a taste of post-secondary learning, something they had never dreamed or imagined for themselves.

"Our role is one of a coach, of helping someone reach a goal," said Meats. "What keeps me going personally is the potential I see in our young people. God gives us glimpses of them, their strength, their tenacity, their survival skills. They touch us with their amazing stories."

Teens who turned to Evergreen put their hands together to make another mural in the art therapy program: "Healing hands echo in eternity."

The clinic of Ruth Ewert, a registered nurse, was the beginning of the journey to healing.

"God started [the clinic] really. ➤

Clockwise: A mural in the main hall illustrates some fruits of the spirit; an area for the children of young parents; and a young woman gets her teeth checked in the dental clinic.

He was my hands and my brains," said Ewert. "Fifty-six per cent of our youth are parents without children. When we're involved, only 14 per cent lose their children to the Children's Aid Society." She helps the young parents break the cycle of abandonment and fear. She sets them on a path to becoming responsible for not only themselves but for their children.

"The parents are young. For the most part, they never had good role models. They're homeless and they're street involved. Sometimes they have mental health issues and addictions."

The clinic offers straight talk and information on an array of issues: pamphlets on crack cocaine, Oxycontin, street methadone, Hepatitis C and sexually transmitted diseases line the waiting room wall.

"Although they're in this for their child, as noble as that is, they're as loving as anyone, they cannot provide the physical and emotional [supports]."

Ewert, however, recognizes their quest to give and to find love, as many young women become pregnant again to have a child who will love them unconditionally.

"A few days ago, a woman gave birth and she knew from the outset she had a very small chance of keeping her baby. She had mental health issues and developmental issues. Some people have lost previous children to the Children's Aid Society. You're kind of marked."

They live stuck in a hopeless cycle. "The cycle of loss and horror continues until they go underground. They may go to another province. It's a bad situation for everybody."

Evergreen offers parenting classes. As an incentive beyond being able to keep their children, Evergreen offers gift certificates for groceries and clothes.

The class creates a place where friendships can be made and as they realize they're not alone, participants support and encourage each other to carry on, even while the journey remains rough.

"One mom lost her home last week, so she's shacked up with another girl, her boyfriend and their kids," Ewert said. Accustomed to fighting to survive alone, they build their natural support networks.

The clinic also offers the basics of health and dental care, with nurses, a doctor, dentist, dental hygienist, Chinese medicine practitioner, naturopath and chiropractor. There's also foot

care, essential for those who fill their days walking the streets.

There's also a baby food bank and an identification clinic. Many teens and young adults on the run lose their ID and can't access social services or public programs. They may have no health card, which can cut them off from hospital care.

"One young woman was 40 weeks pregnant and she was labouring. She walked to three different hospitals because they didn't want to take the risk of accepting someone with no history," Ewert said.

It's a sad reflection on Canada; a reality many Canadians would rather not face. According to a 2007 UNICEF study, Canada ranks 12th out of 21 rich nations when it comes to child welfare; and it is among the bottom few in the categories called, "Family and peer relationships" and "Behaviour and risks." Child poverty is not an issue that's been well addressed, Ewert said.

"They remain in poverty for the rest of their lives. Their education suffers because they move so often."

Each day presents new opportunities but also new struggles.

"Moving away from street life is not a straight line," said Ewert. "You can self-sabotage. They may be about to graduate to working and they stop believing in themselves."

Maria found family, love and hope at Evergreen. A young woman who faced physical and emotional health struggles, Maria was raped at age 13 and diagnosed at 17 with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

Today she has found the mental, physical and spiritual strength to raise her infant son.

"We are all one under the Son," declares one of the banners.

She also found Jesus Christ. "I consider the staff to be my family, not by blood but by relationship and what they're willing to do. When you're upset and crying, they hold your hand and not judge you," she said.

She has obtained her high school diploma and has some good work history. She was accepted into college, but she put that on hold to have her baby.

She shares her strength at Evergreen, too. She helps Evergreen participants with their resumes.

"When your life has been broke, it's hard to piece it back together yourself, because you can't see the whole picture. Love conquers all. I truly believe that," Maria said.

"When you inject love into the lives of people who are encircled in darkness, it makes a much bigger difference." ■

Laurie Watt is a journalist in Barrie, Ont. Maria's name has been changed to protect her privacy.

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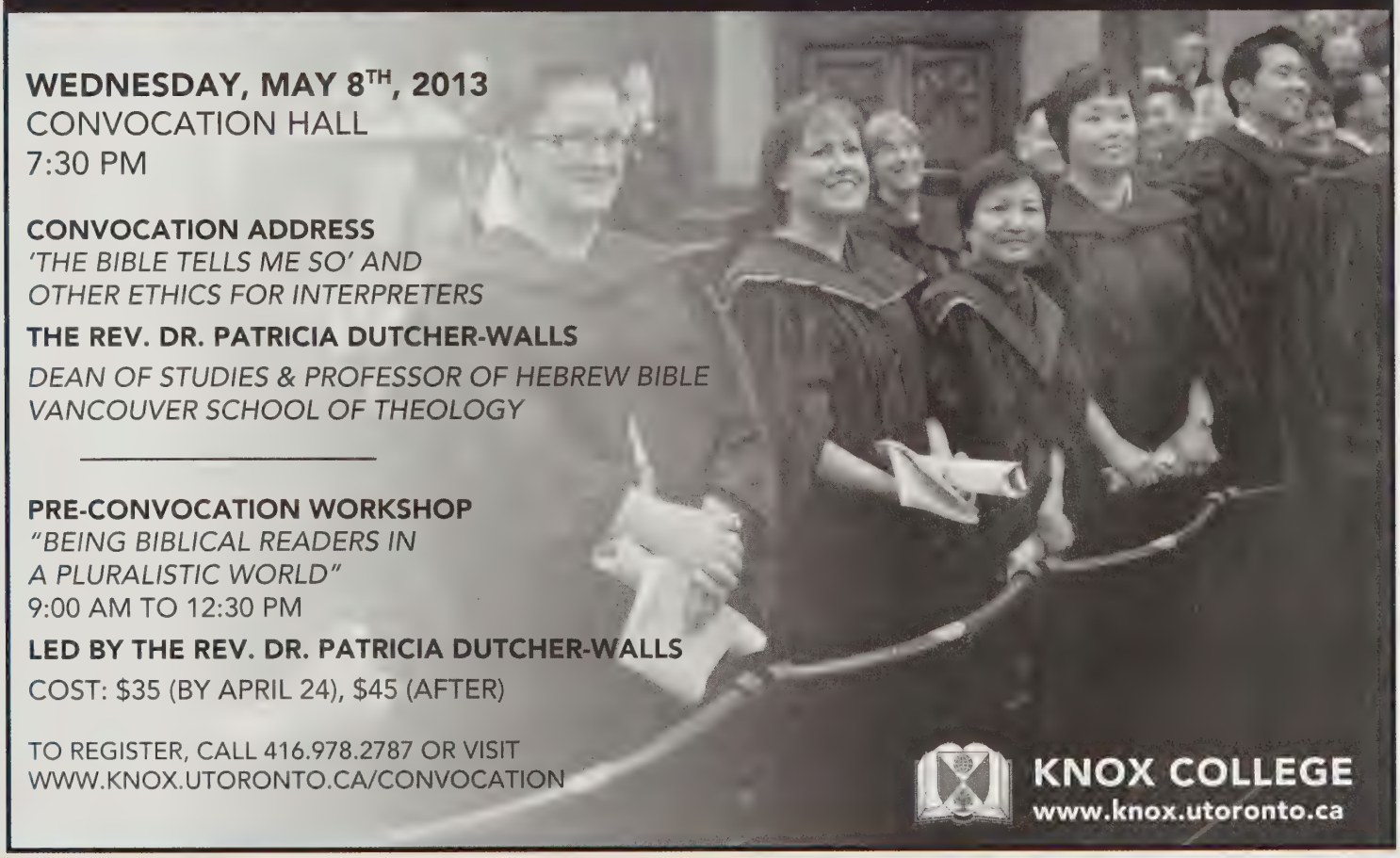

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Trusting and Trying

WEIGHING WHAT WORKS AT WESTMINSTER. **BY MATTHEW RUTTAN**

Westminster is in Barrie, Ont.— a growing city. We've had people pass away and move. There is some changeaphobia. We don't have any money in the bank. And lo and behold, there are a few people who don't always get along. Sound familiar? Six years ago a question wafted in the air: Will we survive?

If you're reading this it's because hope is arising.

In the past five years we've been faithful. The number of worshippers has gone from 65 to over 90. Although some folks are no longer with us, we have 50 new members and many adherents (with more on the way). Numbers aren't that important. Disciples are. Over half of those in worship were not here four years ago. We're a slightly older group but are getting younger. Diversity is good when it reflects your community.

Can we make any generalizations to explain why things are going in the right direction? Does some of the good have to do with introducing a strategic plan, or some praise songs, or different programs, or something else? Church isn't a one-size-fits-all thing. If we don't make the right generalizations this exercise can mess up our thinking.

I wasn't totally sure about the right generalizations so I just asked. The most popular responses were: an "alive vibe," congregational warmth, the gospel boldly preached, young people in leadership, a growing

PHOTOS BY KELLEY SELLERS

outward-helping focus, uplifting music, good use of technology, Christ-centred kids' camps, being more inclusive of children, a strategic plan, tenacity, more people on the Pre-Authorized Remittance program, the willingness to try new ideas, a building that doesn't strangle us, and many grind-it-out volunteers.

It was still hard to find the common threads. So let me share six key moments that sparked change:

1. **Many people had seen the tombstone.** That's a motivator for a spirit of openness. I think it's happening in the Presbyterian Church. Nothing motivates change like the smell of death. Many of the key leaders remember seeing the plot and didn't like it. Also, many of the new folks haven't come from Presbyterian backgrounds and therefore don't bring a perspective of how things ought to be. I'm not sure what that means, but there you go. There's an openness going forward.

2. **Key leaders decided to sweat it out and have hope.** About eight key individuals decided that the mission of the church would continue come hell or high water. High water was better. One person said: "The safest place for ships is in the harbour, but that's not why ships were built."

3. **The church called a minister who believes in the gospel, who loves people and wants to engage the culture around us.** And then they supported him. This seems strange because I'm talking about me. But it's essential to say because not much is said about leadership. And some of us don't have the guts to say that a lot of crisis is leadership crisis. Author and rabbi Edwin Friedman contends that the nature of the leader's presence, their emotional health and their ability to communicate and take care of themselves is a major factor of influence in any organization. So far, God's "fit" is working. Westminster has considered my wellness and set up a human resources team to help. If the minister isn't well—spiritually, physically and mentally—they can (often) be a barrier to wellness for a church. Meetings most evenings is an illness. No balance or family time is a horrible example. Ministers need to be well to be prayerful, learning and creative—not to do it all themselves, but to equip others for the work of ministry. To my mind, if I'm not growing, how can I expect the congregation to grow spiritually? I'm not always the best at this, but I try.

4. **We got a request for help.** In 2009, during the H1N1 flu pandemic, the hospital didn't have enough space, so they requested the church be an intake centre. That was a major turning point. Somewhat rusted door hinges swung more fully open. We realized what we were capable of. It felt good. The congregation has since become increasingly outward-focused. It's a work in progress. But as one person who joined the church shortly afterward said, "I saw that on the news and thought, 'Hey, that place is involved; count me in.'"

5. **All of a sudden people realized they didn't know who everyone was anymore.** That's still the case. It became a blessing to have to work to learn people's names. It was a key moment because we started to ask the question: How welcoming are we, really? And then, how can we help people grow?

6. **We got a plan.** We went to the Stewards by Design conference and it helped our outlook. It wasn't just about money, but about mission and vision. It's a work in progress; our plan already needs updating. But if you need vision, are tired of feeling bad, want to identify and build on your strengths and get a vocabulary to engage your changed neighbourhood, dive into the world of this strategic planning approach. It's not for everyone, but it will vivify your thinking. I have found that if people trust that the direction is faithful and good, then change can be supported. Notice how I didn't say "easy." The benefit of change isn't survival—it's vitality.

So what are the generalizations? Only God really knows; and no technique is sovereign. But I think we can still learn something from this. Here are two things:

1. **A growing spirit of openness and grace.** That's hard. And rare. It means being welcoming and truly caring. Learning names and more. Engaging new things like technology and a different kind of ministry if it doesn't contradict the gospel. The old days are gone—forever. So it means letting some of the tension go and trusting that God is actually who He says He is and that we are His. Remember the word covenant? It means checking in on people and taking over some soup; saying you'll pray for someone and actually doing it; showing generosity toward people who are unlike us; confidently walking out the doors to live as Christians, not coming in the doors to hide. It means being gracious in and to a world in which we are a bit uncool, but that needs grace anyway. ➤

We realized what we were capable of. It felt good. The congregation has since become increasingly outward-focused. It's a work in progress

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2. **This is big: At Westminster it's all about the Lord Jesus.** Key leaders have a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Key successes are grounded in Jesus Christ. If hearing that name too much makes you uncomfortable, Houston, we have a problem. We know that Christ died for us and we are trying to love him and each other because of it. It's all about the Lord Jesus. At Westminster, people come because they have heard of us or have been invited, feel at home, encounter the unique gospel message of Christ and his love and are somehow encouraged or equipped in their lives in a relevant way.

We need to be trying to be excellent. I'm tired of mediocre. Same is no longer good enough. Gospel, sacraments, education, care, community, mission—Yes. But we can't assume anyone knows anything about what those things are, why we do them, or even what our faith means. For many, walking into the church is like walking into a mosque in Istanbul. A totally foreign experience. We need to help them, and ourselves, discover the brilliance of Jesus.

We need to be disciples and then teachers to communities in tatters—parched for truth and hope. At Westminster, many of the new people have first checked out the website and got a "feel" for us, or they have talked to a friend, and then they show up to see how they'll be welcomed. And in these changing times we need to treat every single person who takes a leap of faith, packs up the family and comes to a strange thing called a worship service on a Sunday morning when everyone else is hitting the snooze button, like a direct miracle from God Almighty.

In our own flawed way we are trying to be excellent. We're on the road. Many people have differing opinions about where the ditches are and what the speed limit is. But there is a growing spirit of openness and grace and it's all about the Lord Jesus. Who knows? We've got a three-year plan, but we're also going month by month on two knees at a time. Igor Stravinsky once wrote a new musical piece that had a very difficult violin passage. After several weeks of rehearsal a player said it was too hard, even unplayable. Stravinsky replied, "I understand that. What I am after is the sound of someone trying to play it."

That's us. With Christ alone—trusting and trying. ■

Rev. Matthew Ruttan is minister at Westminster, Barrie, Ont. He writes a blog at presbyterianrecord.ca.

One Simple Rule

EXPLORE YOUR FAITH.

BY ALAN STEWART

Jesus used the rule for all of the people he met: John the Baptist, the woman at the well, the blind man, the lepers, Mary and Martha, Zacchaeus, the centurion, Peter's mother-in-law, the beggar who was healed, Bartimaeus, etc.

Jesus showed this rule in various stories and parables: feeding the 5,000, the woman brought before him accused of adultery, the rich man and Lazarus, the parable of the lost son, the servant's wages, his grief over his friend Lazarus, his praise for the widow's mite, washing his disciples feet, his healing of the soldier's ear in Gethsemane, his kindness to the malefactor executed by his side, and so on.

Judas didn't get it; he didn't want the precious ointment wasted on Jesus's feet, but Jesus accepted the woman's intimate, kind and generous act of love because he knew she embraced the one simple rule.

As Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ, there is one simple, golden, ironclad rule that will bring life and vitality for us as individuals and our churches as families of faith.

Our churches would flourish beyond our expectations if we treated each and every man, woman, boy, girl and baby we meet as having exceptional value.

If we truly value all people then we would know the names of all of the people around us in church. Instead of asking others we know who they are, we would introduce ourselves to them. We would love to teach Sunday school. We would ask visiting company and family to come to church rather than skipping church because we have company or there is a family event. We would freely make motions at meetings that strengthen our churches. We would see people from our churches outside of morning worship. The church would not empty in five minutes after worship. We would be highly interested in other people's lives, cares and concerns, and know what they are. When people are in trouble, we would ensure that they get to their job or church, medical appointments or the grocery store.

Do we bend down and speak to the children at their level or ignore them?

Do we actually tell people that we love them and show it by our actions?

Who do you love in your church and who definitely knows that you love them?

How do we communicate our belief that each and every person has value?

Explore your faith. Turn the questions into statements and see what happens. ■

Rev. Alan Stewart is minister at St. John's, New London, and Kensington, P.E.I.

ISTOCKPHOTO

Taking Risks

DOES YOUR CHURCH NEED AN ENTERPRISE RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE? HOW CHURCHES CAN LEARN FROM SHIFTS IN BIG BUSINESS.

BY ANDE CLUMPUS

Within the church, it's impossible to not take risks. With every day, every service and every event, there are uncertainties, likelihoods and probabilities that come into play that can result in positive or negative outcomes. Will offerings be enough to cover all expenses? Will the sanctuary hold up through another winter? Will members of different ideologies and opinions be able to worship God together? Risk is inevitable. The negative outcomes it produces, however, are not.

This is why Enterprise Risk Management can be just as important for churches as it is for businesses and corporations and why it would be wise for any church to consider its options. Through the use of an ERM system the church can see risks affecting the whole of their church, not just the individual portions. By doing this, an organization can determine its risk appetite—how much risk it is generally willing to take—and apply that to every aspect of its business. ERM involves not only identifying risks, but managing them to appropriate levels, developing response plans to the outcomes and communicating these risks to others in the organization.

Through identifying, managing and responding to risk, a church is able to take a proactive approach to facing the uncertainties that may come its way. And while it is impossible to prevent all bad outcomes from happening, the church that is already aware of these outcomes and has worked to minimize and respond to them will be in a much better place than the one that is hit with them out of the blue. When problematic issues arise, being prepared can help guide a church and its congregation through the troubles much faster and with greater ease.

Take the case of Roxboro United, which found itself in a messy situation. This church, in a western borough of Montreal, was approached by the telecom company Telus to have a cell-phone tower built on the church's property. In addition to improving reception in the area, the church would receive thousands of dollars in rent every year. However, when the plan to build was revealed, neighbours quickly started petitions and protests against the church's decisions, citing health and aesthetic concerns. The city council soon became involved, threatening legal action against Roxboro if the tower was erected.

> Instead of being able to reach out to its community, the church found itself on the defensive, weathering attacks from local residents and the council

Instead of being able to reach out to its community, the church found itself on the defensive, weathering attacks from local residents and the council. By using an ERM committee, the church could have foreseen the risks associated with the cell tower and developed a recommendation on whether the church should proceed and, if so, what it could proactively do to minimize fallout from the installation. Having such a plan in place may have prevented much of the conflict and kept the church in good relations with its neighbours.

By taking a hard look at the risks they face, organizations are able to determine where they are weakest and can develop strategies to minimize that weakness. Risk management can also lead to new and updated policies that allow an organization to run more efficiently and a greater feeling of confidence and assurance that threats have been reduced and response plans exist should problems arise.

The end result is a committee that can be worth its weight in gold and will provide a crucial service for the church. By forming an enterprise risk management committee, Presbyterian churches across the country can foresee risks, develop appropriate responses and greatly reduce the negative outcomes that arise from special situations. Then the whole church, from elders to ministers to congregants, can breathe easier, knowing that they are prepared for the challenges that lie ahead, and can instead focus their energy on reaching out. As in Matthew 25, the ones who proved they can manage the gifts given to them have more responsibility bestowed upon them, but the one who did nothing with his gift is thrown "outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." ■

Ande Clumpus grew up attending Clarkson, Mississauga, Ont. He recently completed his MBA at Dalhousie University, Halifax, focusing on church management and consulting.

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We look forward to having you visit us.

Clean Hearts, Loyal Spirits

HOPE FOR A BROKEN WORLD.

BY REBEKAH MITCHELL

"Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Renew a loyal spirit within me."—Psalm 51:10

Renewal, like commitment, is not something that happens once and is done with. Sometimes we forget that. We think that having had the experience once, we are good. We think that we have checked it off the list. One more thing accomplished. One more experience off the bucket list.

But renewal isn't like that. Renewal is like the commitment one makes on their wedding day. A commitment that must be reaffirmed the next day, the day after that, the next week and so on, for all the moments of temptation or boredom or frustration one faces in all the days to come.

Renewal must be experienced again and again and again because our spirits are so easily exhausted. It doesn't take much for the life of faith to go off the rails. A time of elevated stress can lead to the neglect of spiritual practices and a feeling of being far from God ... or God being far from us. A sudden loss or even a sudden gain can distract us from our relationship with God. The simple routine of life can lead us to a point where we realize that we have been going on about our business without involving God in our living at all.

It happens easily. And that might seem terribly frightening. Faith, the relationship with the living God of the universe, His only begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, can be a fairly fragile thing. But the good news is, God longs for relationship with us. God longs to renew the poor in spirit. God longs for our hearts to burn for Him.

And therefore, as fragile as faith may be, it is also a thing easily renewed. What is needed is a heart that truly longs for closeness with God and the willingness to pray that God will create in us a clean heart, will renew in us a loyal spirit.

Faith, the relationship with the living God of the universe, His only begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, can be a fairly fragile thing

That is my prayer every time Christians gather in worship; every time I sit down to write a sermon, every time I am about to preach that sermon. That is my prayer for us as individuals, for each of our congregations and for our church as a whole: that God would be relentless in creating in us clean hearts and loyal spirits.

I pray this because there is a whole world outside each of our doorways that needs us to live with clean hearts and spirits that are loyal to Jesus. Our world is broken and sometimes desperately dark. But we are called to be the light that shines in the darkness, the hope for a world that is broken.

And we will only be able to shine if we are renewed and strong in our relationship with the One who is the source of all our hope, all our light. ■

Rev. Rebekah Mitchell is associate minister at St. Andrew's, Brampton, Ont.

CAN WE DOUBT?

A CONVERSATION ABOUT UNCERTAINTIES.

ILLUSTRATION BY KATY LEMAY

It's a lot to take in—the Trinity, the resurrection, the hymns, the history, the culture, the ritual. Seasoned churchgoers aren't always certain about these things. And while they keep coming to church, they don't always feel the permission to ask questions. To express their uncertainties. To doubt.

Doubt has become a dirty word in church. As if to say "I'm really not sure," somehow derails the whole enterprise.

But doubt can be healthy; a way to think through everything we take for granted. More importantly, though, asking questions, naming our doubt, can bring us to greater understanding of our faith.

Tom Allen is a broadcaster and musician. He is a regular in the pews, with bona fide Presbyterian roots, including a sibling who is a Presbyterian minister. Still, he openly confesses he doesn't understand everything that goes on in church.

Without resorting to any philosopher or theologian who may have framed the conversation, (for that you'll have to wait a month) the *Record's* Andrew Faiz met with Allen and Rev. Will Ingram, minister at St. Andrew's King Street, Toronto, to talk about this thing we church people don't like to talk about. ➤

All of that, that structure is imposed, right? We've decided that's how it should work. It doesn't have to work that way

We have 2,000 years of great history, man. Rev. Ingram, would you please defend your job?

TOM ALLEN: A popular perception of church is that if you go to church then you're convinced; you're already sold on every aspect of what you're hearing. You're a complete believer. And if you say "I'm a Christian" in the modern context, you're really being perceived as saying "I'm a fundamentalist and I believe that everything in the Bible is the word of God and there's no room for any kind of doubt." And I think that's a real loss because I personally have tremendous doubts.

I think doubt is the key to intelligent discussion and to knowing ourselves better. And if we allow ourselves—that is, if the church allows itself to be pushed into this place of absolutes then it loses almost all thinking people.

There has to be doubt and if we are secure and confident in what the church is doing, then we needn't be afraid of doubt. In fact we should welcome doubt because doubt is where the action is. Doubt is where people think. Doubt is where people discuss, where they challenge themselves. We need to have a community where people are allowed to be doubtful and not be shamed or drummed out of the church or however typified as something other than belonging.

ANDREW FAIZ: So what are we doubting here? Are we doubting the creed?

TOM ALLEN: Maybe.

ANDREW FAIZ: Are we doubting there is a God?

TOM ALLEN: I would challenge almost anyone to say that there's no point in their life when they don't wonder if there's a God. At some point most of us go through something that has us asking, what's happening here, how can this be?

ANDREW FAIZ: This subverts a lot of the structure of church.

TOM ALLEN: I don't know about that.

ANDREW FAIZ: Well, it does because we come into church and church presents us with this packaged picture of belief and story, and then we have this liturgy with which we affirm all that stuff.

TOM ALLEN: All of that, that structure is imposed, right? We've decided that's how it should work. It doesn't have to work that way.

ANDREW FAIZ: We have 2,000 years of great history, man. Rev. Ingram, would you please defend your job?

WILL INGRAM: No. Because I actually agree with much of what Tom says. I think one of the problems in our culture is that we have come to a point where we equate faith with certainty. So we think that if you say, "I believe," that means, "I know this for sure." It's against the entire structure of biblical faith.

The church, in its wisdom, came along and said, "No, you can't know, you have to believe." And in the [Apostles'] creed itself, we don't start by saying, "I know that God is the Father almighty, creator of heaven." We say, "I believe." And belief is constantly an invitation.

I heard a great sermon years and years ago in which this great Baptist preacher said, "As the island of human knowledge expands, so too does the shoreline of mystery." And I think that that's very true of the last 150 years. The more we learn about science and psychology and the construction of biblical texts and history and archaeology and all the things that are putting the biggest questions to our supposed certainties about faith, that also exposes us to a greater line of mystery.

TOM ALLEN: Right. So it's the evidence of things not seen. That's exactly it. The creed of this church where we

can talk about doubt probably would start with, "I want to believe." I really would like to believe ... but.

I want to reserve the right to come to a Christian church because that's the culture into which I was born and the one that fits me most comfortably. I'm not telling you this is true for me, but let's say every week I go to church I end up frustrated by something I hear or angry at some bit of dogma or uncomfortable that I don't belong here; but still somehow there's a reason that I'm coming back because I feel like there's some place for me there. I think any structure that tells me I'm not allowed to come in is wrong.

I heard a minister once make reference in the middle of a prayer or sermon to the unnameable, unknown thing that we call God, that each of us calls God. But the idea was that whatever God is to each of us is an individual thing. We may have common beliefs on some level but in the end it's an individual relationship.

WILL INGRAM: In the Jewish scriptures, the whole idea was that the name we transliterate as Yahweh or Jehovah was actually an unpronounceable name and you had to figure out what the vowels were that went with the consonants. I think there's a profound spiritual wisdom in that.

We have been wrestling with these issues for hundreds of years. So, let's do it in a way where our questions emerge out of these conversations and dialogue with the past as well as with ourselves and with each other. Rather than saying this is the litmus test and if you don't believe this you have no place any longer in the church. Because as Tom says, it's not only every life, it's every day that you have questions about the existence of God and everything else like that.

When I have been involved in ecumenical or interfaith conversations and dialogues, it is vitally important that those who are engaged have to enter into it knowing where they, and their tradition, stand on issues and perspectives, even if questions and doubts arise. Before you can make a journey with another person, you have to know where you are starting from; you have to know where you stand.

My understanding of the nature of God and of human existence is mediated through some level of engagement. And the more I get thinking about it and study, somehow my understanding of that mystery, that unnameable, unknowable, is in some way tied in with Jesus.

I think it's one of the reasons that I really value the Presbyterian tradition because we have a place here if you want to be here, no questions. And I think that's far more grace-filled and Christ-like. Instead of saying you can only be at the table if you're a card-carrying member and in agreement.

ANDREW FAIZ: Okay, then we're running two strains here. One is the journey of an individual to try and understand their own spiritual longing and their own relationship. At the same time we're talking about something institutional.

WILL INGRAM: We have to figure out individually: what is our goal, what is our purpose in some embrace of a spiritual path in our lives. Absolutely. I don't think that we've yet really wrestled with what is the goal, what is the purpose of the institution, and I think that's a really important thing for us to wrestle with. Take St. Andrew's context, for example. We've been wrestling with how to define the nature of community in a place like this where there are people here on Sunday morning, and also on Monday night helping with Out of the Cold.

TOM ALLEN: And not necessarily the same people.

WILL INGRAM: Absolutely not. And in actual fact there are many people here Monday night who have never darkened the doors and never will darken the doors on Sunday morning. There's an Alcoholics Anonymous group that meets three times a week. There's the lecture series. There's all these other things. Can we say that they're not part of our community? Take the Monday night Out of the Cold volunteers; those people are in fact participating in the mission and ministry of the church. But we would not be so presumptuous as to say they're Presbyterian, or even that they're Christian. But if a person is participating in the ministry and mission of a church community, the goal for which we exist, that being a place where the hungry can be fed, how can we say that they're not part of the church community?

TOM ALLEN: Who may or may not identify themselves as believers at all but because they have this place to go to they can be part of something larger and something good.

WILL INGRAM: Can we be a community that actually creates opportunities of context for people to do that very human thing, which is to reach out in compassionate service to others? That really starts to break down the whole idea of who is the served and who is the server.

TOM ALLEN: Yes.

WILL INGRAM: Because in order for that program to happen, you have to have people eat the food. So those who come to eat are actually providing a service to those who have the need to serve. ➤

TOM ALLEN: Is there one group which is the real church or that are more part of the church; the ones that go on Sunday and, you know, give money to the collection plate and say the creed? Are they somehow more churchy than the people who come just to serve Out of the Cold? If the larger church is going to actually survive and grow and expand they have to say, "No." They have to say that people, humans, need this interaction. That the church is providing something really necessary.

WILL INGRAM: Absolutely. The Bible tells us, the toe can't say to the eye, "I have no need of you." In the worldwide church of Christ it is only together that we fulfill all of the dimensions.

If you have an idea of the call of the church to be involved in justice, there are a lot of times when those who are involved in that work get a little bit judgemental towards those in the more evangelical sides of things. Equally, there are those in the more evangelical sides of things who get kind of uppity about those who are just interested in justice and compassion and all that kind of stuff.

ANDREW FAIZ: Is there room in the church for the personal faith journey? Tom is saying he's on this journey and has a lot of questions, which he doesn't feel are being answered for him on Sunday morning. There are a lot of people like Tom, millions, who want to come in and say, "I sorta kinda like this experience but I'm really not sure what it means and I'm really not sure whether I connect to it."

WILL INGRAM: What's really odd and often forgotten is, there's the complete array of human experience on any given Sunday. One person has just lost the love of their life; one person is feeling some uncertainty about her employment; another person is just on a completely spiritual high; this person over here is really wrestling with meaning and purpose; another person has just been diagnosed with cancer and is heading into a journey that they don't know; the other person down there has just welcomed the birth of their first child. Somehow all these people are all together. There's no Sunday morning that's ever going to completely satisfy everybody. But there's something about being together. There's something about being together in this, walking the journey.

So to answer your question, is there a place for the personal journey of faith? Yes, as long as we don't go overboard in the individual thing. "If it doesn't completely satisfy me on this given Sunday, I'm giving up on it." I don't think that that's what you're saying but … if we're going to be in community, we've got to be in community.

TOM ALLEN: They're there and they're sitting beside other people.

WILL INGRAM: Exactly. We need to have confidence, I think, in the church to say there's a place for creed, there's a place for doubt, there's also a place to be and not to be. And if you don't show up that's your choice and that's fine, that's your freedom to do that, but don't forget that your showing up may be a source of great consolation and hope to the person that's sitting with you and if you only just come for yourself that's maybe not even a good reason to come to church in the first place.

TOM ALLEN: We've grown up through a time when our political and our media figures, leaders, were infallible. You know, when Walter Cronkite said that's the way it was, we believed that it really was the way it was. And since then we've come to a time where we think, "Nah, probably not." There's probably a lot more to it than that. And when we hear our political leaders saying something, I think most people that are adults in this age say, "Hmm, probably not." There's probably a lot more to it than that. We just know that.

So I think we are ready for church leaders that say, "This is what I understand and this is the part I'm not sure about and let's talk about that." I'm as far from a biblical scholar as I can be, but I'm a storyteller and I understand the value of stories. I understand how stories can have truth and an assertion of truth on one hand and at the same time convey questions that are unanswered; and that the greatest stories actually have both those things and we live in this balance. The church should just be confident about that and say, "Okay, well we don't know necessarily. Some of these things are pretty weird, some of this stuff is pretty violent, some of this stuff is really questionable, but here it is, this is the story as we know it. Let's live in that and explore it."

WILL INGRAM: In the essence of the Presbyterian spirituality is a shared leadership so that the conversation can be open and shared.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *managing editor. Rev. Will Ingram is minister at St. Andrew's King Street, Toronto. Tom Allen is a host on CBC Radio Two.*

The Great Continuous Conversion

UNDERSTANDING WHO AND WHOSE WE ARE. **BY JOHN VISSERS**

In a wonderful little book called *The Return of the Prodigal Son,* the spiritual writer Henri Nouwen reminds us that the world often seduces us to claim a false identity. "You are who people say you are," or "You are what you accomplish," or "You are what you have."

So, says Nouwen, in the eyes of the world, if you don't do well, if you don't look good and if you don't have the right friends, lots of money and success, you don't exist.

It's an illusion that we find everywhere. It's in the movies, on television, in social media, in advertising, art and literature.

When we believe these lies, we let the world squeeze us into its own mould (see Romans 12:2). It's a manipulation of who we are and whose we are, a rebranding of our identity to serve a purpose other than God's purpose. It leads to what Nouwen calls a dissipated life as we cling to the addictions that drive us to seek life where it cannot be found.

The gospel, he says, calls us to the great conversion. To return to a life in which I don't have to have the permission or the approval of the world to live. I am not what other people say I am. I am not what I accomplish. I am a beloved son or daughter of God. I belong to God. That is my hope in life and in death; that I belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ (see Heidelberg Catechism, Question 1).

What is true for us as individuals is also true for the church. The world seduces the church to claim a false identity. We measure the life of the church by the standards of the world. It's a dangerous game and it may well be the greatest challenge we confront. At issue is an important question: To whom does the church belong?

PORTRAIT BY WESLEY BATES/THREEINABOX.COM

I am not what other people say I am. I am not what I accomplish. I am a beloved son or daughter of God. I belong to God. That is my hope in life and in death; that I belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ

The church is not what others say it is; the church is not the sum of what it has accomplished; the church is not measured by its successes or failures. The church is not defined by numbers on a roll, by impressive buildings or by numerous resources and programs.

The church is the people of God, the company of God's beloved daughters and sons, saved by grace, called to love, follow and bear witness to the Lord Jesus in the world.

How do we find our way as individuals and as a church without succumbing to the great temptation of forgetting who and whose we are? It's not easy.

But in these days of Easter, I am reminded of the disciples who met Jesus on the Emmaus road (see Luke 24:13-35). They met Jesus on a journey as a company of friends. Jesus revealed himself in the words of scripture, in the breaking of bread and in prayer.

In the Reformed tradition we call this the ordinary means of grace. These are the things that God has given us to sustain the Christian life and help us mature in Christ. As we pray, study scripture and break bread we share in the means of grace and we meet Jesus. We are reminded of who Jesus is and who we are. It creates what one church leader calls the continuous conversion of the church. It is that conversion for which I pray daily, in my own life and in the life of our church. ■

Rev. Dr. John Vissers is director of academic programs and professor of historical theology at Knox College, Toronto.

People & Places

To make People & Places submissions, email: **peopleplaces@presbyterianrecord.ca**

Zion, Angus, Ont.
Interim moderator Rev. James Young stands by a new mural in the church's sanctuary. Painted by James Wylie, the piece was dedicated to God in memory of member Kenneth Duff who passed away last year.

Claude, Caledon, Ont.
The Christmas pageant's heavenly host gathers in the winter light. Pictured are Amber McClure, Leah McClure, Amanda McClure, Colin McClure, Carolyn Wadley and Daniel Wadley.

Flemingdon Community Mission, Toronto
There were plenty of smiles at a service of recognition for Rev. Dr. Glynis Williams (centre), associate secretary of International Ministries. Pictured are Rev. Ian Fraser, minister of St. Columba by-the-Lake, Pointe-Claire, Que., Paulette Brown, executive director of the Flemingdon Community Mission (formerly the Flemingdon Gateway Mission), Glynis Williams, Tony Keith, moderator of the Presbytery of East Toronto, and Rev. Helen Smith, convener of the Life and Mission Agency.

Elmvale, Ont.
At the age of 87, Earl Graves retired as church treasurer after 23 years of service. Here, he accepts a certificate of appreciation from Rev. Paul Sakasov, who presented it on behalf of the congregation at their annual meeting in February.

Winchester, Ont.
Congratulations Robert Purcell and Joan Evelyn Farlinger! They were awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for significant contributions to their communities. They are pictured here in the home of Janet Clapp, elder at St. Paul's, Winchester, where they enjoyed an evening of fellowship with eight other Presbyterians.

St. Andrew's, Nanaimo, B.C.
Sunday school students presented a $1,000 cheque to the Loaves and Fishes Community Food Bank. Half of the money came from the students' offerings and the other half came from their sale of art cards, which featured the artwork of their classmate, Audra Moore. Pictured are Sarah Moore, Sarah Lewis, Kate Findlay, Audra Moore and Bronwyn McCormick.

ONLINE EXTRA

ON OUR WEBSITE:
Two churches in Oshawa, Ont., support street youth; Sunday school students from Maple Ridge, B.C., raise money for farmers in Pakistan; young congregants in Stellarton, N.S., gather pet supplies for the local SPCA.

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Nottawa, Emmanuel; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Heather Malnick, 206 Murphy Rd., Baxter, ON L0M 1B1; 705-424-0779; livingfaithbaxter@gmail.com.

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Oshawa, Knox; Interim Moderator Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith, c/o Burns Presbyterian Church, 765 Myrtle Rd. W., Ashburn, ON L0B 1A0; 905-925-6346; jeremy@burnschurch.org.

Scarborough, Fallingbrook, Interim Moderator Rev. Wayne Kleinsteuber, 60 Overlord Cres., Toronto, ON M1B 4P3; revandthemrs@sympatico.ca.

Scarborough, Melville; Interim Moderator Rev. Dennis Cook, c/o St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church, 97 Burcher Rd., Ajax, ON L1S 2R3; 905-683-6122; dencook@rogers.com.

Whitby, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Alexander Wilson, 17 Colonial Ave., Scarborough, ON M2M 2C3; 416-431-0841 (church) or 647-501-0632 (cell); st.stephens.scarborough@gmail.com.

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Bayfield, Knox; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. John Henderson, PO Box 824, Exeter, ON N0M 1S6; 519-235-2608; henderson.johncharles@gmail.com.

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Burlington, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Robert Docherty, c/o Knox Presbyterian Church=, 461 Elizabeth St., Burlington, ON L7R 4B1; 905-333-3013; revbob.docherty@gmail.com.

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Fingal, Knox; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Kevin Steeper; 519-438-3492; ksteeper@elmwoodchurch.ca.

Sarnia, Laurel Lea-St. Matthews; Interim Moderator Rev. Harvey Osborne, PO Box 1878, Petrolia, ON N0N 1R0; hosborne77@gmail.com.

Stoney Creek, Heritage Green; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Charmain Sebestyen; csebesyten@shaw.ca.

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Thunder Bay, Ont., St. Andrew's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Harold Hunt; revhunt@me.com.

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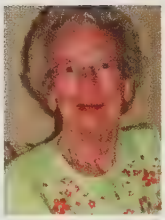
Obituaries



Brisbin, Helen Isabel (MacDonald), June 2, 1922-September 22, 2012. Youngest daughter of Rev. Dr. Charles H. MacDonald, moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1948 and Ellen MacDonald. Helen joined the Lucknow Presbyterian Church choir at age 10 and for the next 74 years was a member in choirs at St. Andrew's King Street, Toronto, St. Andrew's, Belleville, St. Andrew's, Pickering, and St. Andrew's, Guelph, Ont.

Helen was a woman of deep faith and everywhere she lived, her church, its life and mission were a passion which was expressed through her concern for others. Helen's celebration of life was conducted by her niece Dr. Margaret Henderson, her nephew Rev. John Henderson and Rev. John Borthwick.

Helen was predeceased by her husband Jim of 61 years in 2008. She is survived by her son David (Jackie) of Elora, Ont., daughters Marion (George) Glumac and Peggy O'Kane of Guelph, Ont., six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. As her father was one of the founders of Camp Kintail, it was requested that donations in Helen's memory be made to the camp.

Fee, Edna Margaret (Fairweather) (1919–2013) After being cared for in the most compassionate and loving manner by Kathleen, Edna Fee died quietly and peacefully in Doug and Kathy's home in DeWinton, Alta., on Sunday, March 3, 2013.

Born on January 13, 1919, in Southey, Sask., Edna Fairweather moved in 1932 with her parents, Letitia May (Foster) and William Stewart Fairweather and sister, Grace, to Killam, Alta. She had been baptized on June 29, 1919, by Rev. R. McNaughtan in Southey.

She was a 1941 graduate of the Misericordia Hospital Nursing Program (Edmonton) and served as nurse in the Killam Medical Clinic and at the Auxiliary Hospital in Killam. She also enabled Edward, her husband of 59 years, to serve on many health boards and community organizations.

She lived a life of respectful, quiet and exemplary service to the health community, her church and her family. In her Christian faith and church life, Edna fulfilled several roles in the Presbyterian Church. She hosted visiting clergy, taught Sunday school, was a member of the choir and faithfully served in the Ladies Association. She was a lifelong Presbyterian, but, jointly with Edward, understood the nature of Christian faith in a small community. They knew that ecumenical sharing was brought about by people showing Christian character of respect, care and love.

Edna's present family is comprised of children, Douglas, Corinne and Richard; Kathleen, daughter-in-law, and Garry Oberg, son-in-law. She has five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held in Killam on Wednesday, March 6. Rev. Stephen Haughland officiated with the sermon offered by Rev. Dr. Richard Fee.

McKay, Dorothy, longtime, faithful member of St. Andrew's, Orillia, Ont., died in her 99th year on January 2, 2013. The service conducted by the Rev. Karen Horst was held in

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St. Andrew's on January 7. Her children, Mary (Douglas) Cooper of Kitchener, Ont., Gary (Sarah) McKay of Toronto, Jim (Lillian) McKay of Saskatoon, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren give God thanks for her life and witness.

Turner, John Melville, passed away peacefully with his family at his side in his residence on Sunday, January 20, 2013 in his 91st year. Beloved husband and best friend of June (nee Gadd); devoted father of David, Jim (Debbie), Rob (Mary-Lou), Heather Dyer (Bruce), Tim (Wendy) and Ian (Laura). Sadly missed by his 12 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Loving brother to Dr. Arthur Turner (Margaret Jane). Predeceased by his parents Melville and Ola Turner and his sister Dorothy Holman.

John was born in Peterborough, Ont., on September 24, 1922. He attended Peterborough area schools including Lakefield College School and joined the RCAF in 1942. He returned to Peterborough in 1945 and joined W. R. Turner Ltd. John was elected to Peterborough City Council in 1968. During this term he was a member of the board of St. Joseph's Hospital and chairperson of the Peterborough County-City Health Unit.

John was elected to the Ontario Legislature as MPP in October 1971. He was re-elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1977, 1981, and 1985. He was appointed Speaker of the Ontario Legislature from 1981-1985.

John was a lifelong member of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, member of the Peterborough Rotary Club, former Worshipful Master of Wm. James Dunlop Masonic Lodge, lifelong member of the Peterborough YMCA and former president of United Service Institute. In February 2012, John was a recipient of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. ■

"When I was a teenager off at summer camp, one of the youth leaders told this story [of the prodigal son] as a personal account. He was clever in his telling—weaving a confessional tone and changing enough of the details that we didn't wake up to what the source story was. ... He told us that he'd taken money from his parents and run away to Toronto. Drugs and parties and we were hooked. Then he told us about going back home again and about expecting his folks to call the cops on him. It was a really powerful story. And had some powerful reaction, too. People believed him. And then felt betrayed when they figured it out.

"Stories become really powerful when we make them personal."
—Katie Munnik, The Messy Table

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Courage & God's Call

JOHN CALVIN WAS A MAN SEEKING 'THE QUIET LONG DENIED ME.' **BY CONNIE WARDLE**

From July 6 to 22, 2012, Connie Wardle participated in a pilgrimage through countries touched by the Protestant Reformation—France, Switzerland and Scotland. This is the fourth of a series of reflections on the journey.

Strasbourg, France

I can see why John Calvin wanted to come to Strasbourg. Today the island at the heart of the city is an UNESCO world heritage site. Its streets are lined with picturesque buildings and its bridges with flower boxes. Churches seem to emerge around every corner. Although it is now part of France, in Calvin's day it was a free city that embraced the Reformed faith.

Calvin described himself as "a man of the country and a lover of shade and leisure." He was seeking, he wrote, a place where he could enjoy, "unknown, in some corner, the quiet long denied me."

As he prepared to leave France forever, I wonder if his future unfolded in his mind's eye—a life of quiet reading, study and writing, perhaps punctuated by friendly debates with intelligent people. It was a simple, unambitious dream. Yet it was dashed before he saw the tower of Strasbourg Cathedral.

It was the fault of a friend, of course. (Or a man who would become a friend.) So many of life's great changes are. In 1538, as Calvin journeyed from France toward Strasbourg, he discovered the most direct road was blocked by the movement of French troops. He was forced to make a detour to the city of Geneva. He only planned to stay for one night.

It was William Farel, an ardent reformer working with the church in that city, who sought Calvin out and tried to convince him to stay and take on a public ministry. He did so, Calvin said, "not so much with advice or urging as by command, which had the power of God's hand laid violently upon me from heaven." When Farel realized Calvin was "determined to study in privacy in some obscure place," Calvin said, "he descended into cursing, and said that God would surely curse my peace if I held back from giving help at a time of such great need."

I wonder if Calvin resented that curse at first. He stayed, of course, and although he had no formal training as a teacher or a pastor, he became one and then the other. Perhaps he saw in Farel the Holy Spirit shaking him from his slumber, telling him there was work to be done. Perhaps many of us could use a friend to curse our peace and push us toward a calling.

Together Calvin, Farel and their fellow church leaders worked in the city, struggling constantly in religious and political turmoil. A dispute between the church leaders and the city council over the sacrament of communion proved to be the last straw. The pastors refused to administer communion during an Easter service. There was a riot. The next day, the council kicked them out of Geneva.

Calvin wrote he was "more pleased than was fitting" at that development. Once again, he dreamed of living quietly in relative obscurity. And once again he was hauled back into the pulpit.

This time it was by Martin Bucer in Strasbourg; he came armed with the story of Jonah and urged Calvin not to flee from the task set before him by God.

Although Calvin's faith in his pastoral abilities was probably shaken, he remained in Strasbourg. He became pastor of a congregation of French refugees and spent some of the happiest years of his life here. He preached, taught, wrote and debated theology. He married Idelette de Bure, a widow, and became a father to her two children. His time in this city proved to be, in its way, a peaceful interlude.

It must take a great deal of courage to abandon your plans and follow a call someone else has discerned. Calvin's time in Strasbourg may not have been what he dreamed it would be, but I hope it offered him some of the peace he craved. ■

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s senior staff writer.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY CONNIE WARDLE

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'Beginning with the resurrection, God's light spreads throughout the world and throughout history. Day dawns'

seeing was incomprehensible. How could this be?

If Dad was a critter of habit he also leaned towards being a tad superstitious. I suppose that at least partially explains his reaction. Sometime long ago in his interesting past, someone had told him the story of the will-o'-the wisp, the mysterious flickering lantern sometimes seen by travellers over bogs or hayfields. It was said to be created by an evil fairy meaning to lure the traveller off the beaten path in order to get them eternally lost. As he furiously blinked his bleary eyes, he dredged this story up from somewhere deep within his memory and suddenly it became very real to him. This had to be a will-o'-the wisp assembly. There had to be thousands of them. Dad quickly modified his easy night stroll into a jog for home.

I don't think I really have to tell the rest of the story. Most of us can probably feel Dad's panic at this point. Who has not started jogging from some perceived threat in the dark and found that with each step the jog accelerates into a flat out panic-driven sprint for safety? Dad's rapidly accelerating sprint for home was three kilometres long. And if I remember his story right, he arrived home with only one shoe on.

What Dad's imagination deemed a will-o'-wisp convention was really a firefly pupation party. Usually there seem to be just a few fireflies around and people seldom see them. But on just the right warm spring night, in just the right hayfield, the light show can be absolutely amazing. Dad had unknowingly hit just the right hayfield on just the right night.

What is amazing is that the firefly pupation party flared up from under the ground. The different species of North American fireflies spend up to two years underground as larvae before they pupate to spend the final two weeks of their lives as adults, flashing, mating and laying eggs. With fireflies, the light comes from underground, like the resurrection. And it is almost as incomprehensible.

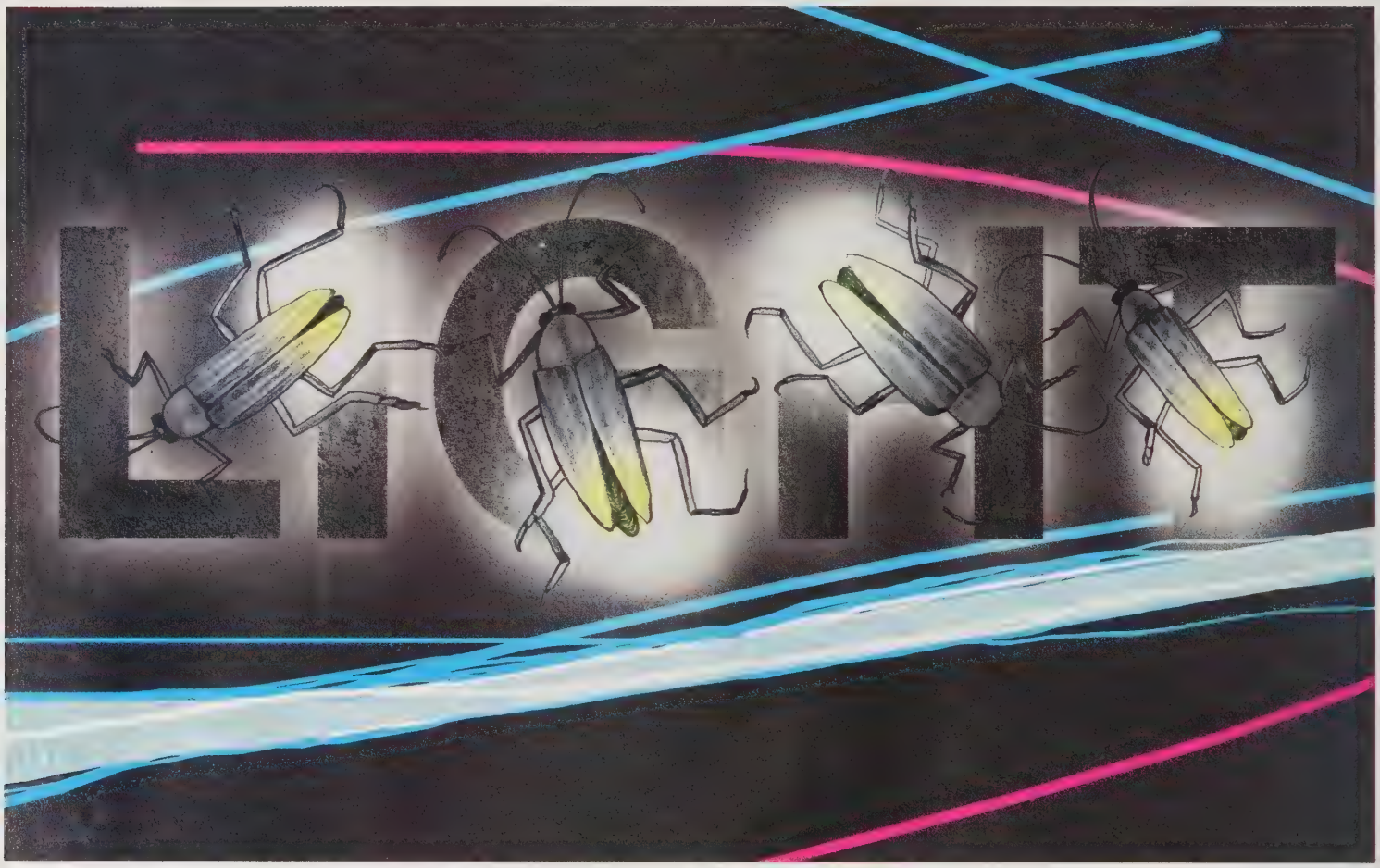
Christmas, for the most part, is something I can get my mind around. It's filled with shepherds, travellers from other lands, an extremely uptight husband and a mother desperately straining to give birth. Even with the angel visitations, somehow I can relate to all this. It's all so human. But Easter, that's a different kettle of fish. The bodily resurrection of a mutilated corpse seems incomprehensible; it was for the disciples 2,000 years ago and remains so today, at least for me. And the incomprehensible sets some to running away and others to leaning on superstition. The risen Jesus corners the runners and confronts the superstitious. He tracks them down in their hideouts and disproves their superstitions by eating, drinking and touching. But still I am left struggling with how I can relate.

To help me to be able to relate to the incomprehensible resurrection, the writer of John's gospel—which I believe is different from the three synoptic gospels in that it is a resurrection story from the very first to the very last verse—begins by giving me powerful symbols. John's resurrection story begins with a creation story with Jesus placed right in the middle: "All things came into being through him, and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:3-5).

Somehow I am transported back to the Genesis creation story and I hear the divine command, "Let there be light!" I realize that order is brought out of chaos with this command. I realize that all life begins with this command. But with John's gospel it's like a prophecy waiting underground for the resurrection to flare up in bright light fulfillment. Pope Benedict XVI said, "The resurrection of Jesus is an eruption of light. Death is conquered, the tomb is thrown open. The Risen One himself is Light, the Light of the world. With the resurrection, the Lord's day enters the nights of history. Beginning with the resurrection, God's light spreads throughout the world and throughout history. Day dawns. This Light alone—Jesus Christ—is the true light, something more than the physical phenomenon of light. He is pure Light: God himself, who causes a new creation to be born in the midst of the old, transforming chaos into cosmos."

With all the death, darkness and chaos in my life, I can relate to this; I need to relate to this. In the words of Robert Lowry, "up from the grave he arose" and if I stand and believe the incomprehensible resurrection, rather than run and resort to the comfort of my doubts and superstitions, the promise is that this Risen One has the power to command light and life in my life; to make me a new creation defeating the death, darkness and chaos that suck the life right out of me. The Risen One promises: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). ■

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of several books.



Light From Underground

NEVER WALK IN DARKNESS.

BY DAVID WEBBER • ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY FALLS

Dad was a creature of habit, many good, a few not so good and one or two that were downright peculiar. I am not sure what category his spring romances fit into but as sure as green-up time would come each April my young, single father would find himself in courting mode come May. One particular spring evening when I was about six or seven years old, Dad left me in the care of my grandparents and hotfooted it a couple of kilometres over to a neighbour's. They had a daughter who was also a single parent. A few people gathered and the night turned into a bit of a party. Apparently the jar was generously passed. By the time Dad realized that he'd better hike home to catch some shut-eye before work, it was well past midnight. He slowly wandered down the gravel road wanting the warm spring night and the influences of the evening to linger. As he passed by Mrs. Leask's hayfield he paused to drink in the delicious spring air.

That's when he saw them; first just one little spark, then another and another. Dad blinked and shook his head. It just didn't compute. Right before his eyes, which were valiantly struggling to focus, Mrs. Leask's whole hayfield seemed to burst into tiny flaming lanterns. What he was

continued on page 49

"Dear God,
I am so afraid to open my clenched fists! Who will I be when I have nothing left to hold on to? Who will I be when I stand before you with empty hands? Please help me to gradually open my hands and to discover that I am not what I own, but what you want to give me. And what you want to give me is love, unconditional, everlasting love. Amen."

—HENRI J.M. NOUWEN, THE ONLY NECESSARY THING: LIVING A PRAYERFUL LIFE

"A popular perception of church is that if you go to church then you're convinced; you're already sold on every aspect of what you're hearing. You're a complete believer. And if you say 'I'm a Christian' in the modern context, you're really being perceived as saying 'I'm a fundamentalist and I believe that everything in the Bible is the word of God and there's no room for any kind of doubt.' And I think that's a real loss because I personally have tremendous doubts."

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We soil the land with tainted sludge,
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The purchase of our affluence
Is starving nations' pain.

And yet, love lives, and truth and hope.
We laugh and work and dream;
The light which darkness cannot kill,
Shines on with stubborn gleam.

Our faith is frail, it comes, it goes,
Our doubts have deadly power;
But Holy Spirit brooding still,
Rebirths us in this hour.

WORDS BY STUART COLES
From *Jesus and Justice: A Flamethrower's Songbook*, "A collection of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs from Stuart Coles and kindred pilgrims struggling with the disastrous divorce, chronically operational in our churches, between Jesus and Justice."

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Our Comfortable Pew

WE NEED TO LISTEN TO SOME HARSH TRUTHS. **BY DAVID HARRIS**

I can still remember reading Pierre Berton's *The Comfortable Pew*. I was about 14 or 15 I suppose and was starting to pull theological paperbacks from my dad's bookshelf.

The slim volume, published in 1965, was an incisive, some might say devastating, analysis of the Canadian church. Commissioned by the Anglican Church, its sweep—and the reaction it caused—encompassed Anglo-Canadian Christianity.

Berton's book caused considerable discomfort. I both recognized the truth of much of what he said and then felt defensive in reaction to what felt like an attack on my church. Defensiveness, of course, is just a way of denying the truth one has just perceived but is too much to bear.

Ultimately, such reaction turns truth into a lie. In the larger setting of a tribe or community, it temporarily creates a stronger bond among members because they have a common enemy. Sadly, if the perceived enemy is speaking prophetically, the prophecy will be ignored.

Berton was nothing if not prophetic. Perhaps not in all the details, but he did have a sense that organized Christianity, at least among Protestants and Anglicans, had lost its way. And he accurately forecast that, uncorrected, it would result in the churches' demise.

Just look at the numbers. In 1961, in a country of about 18 million, there were about 8.4 million Protestants and Anglicans and 8.3 million Roman Catholics. Forty years later, with a population of 31 million, the number of Protestants and Anglicans was about the same—8.7 million—while Roman Catholics had increased to almost 13 million.

More significantly, however, people of no religion had gone from under 100,000 to 4.8 million! Membership in the Presbyterian Church post-1925 peaked in 1964 at over 202,000. In 2011, it was pretty much half that, at just under 103,000.

Defensiveness is just a way of denying the truth one has just perceived but is too much to bear

The United Church's General Council last year and the Anglican's triennial General Synod this year, fill their agendas with the similar decline of the church and its finances.

So what are church leaders to do today? Well, one thing would be to take a step back and reflect on another shift that happened in the 1960s and '70s.

For whatever reason, and there are probably several, churches in the 1960s began adopting a decidedly left-wing, anti-corporate stance.

Corporate became a swear word.

This trend was unfortunate for many reasons. Corporations and free markets are not going to save the world. But I know of no Christian denomination in Canada that comes close to matching the best corporate practices, from environmental issues to how employees are treated.

And then there's marketing.

Again, no doubt for a variety of reasons, there has been reluctance to adopt the best marketing techniques, both towards members (in order to keep them) and to non-members (to attract them).

Absorbing, sifting and collating this has overwhelmed denominations. Having neglected or spurned the skills and structures to analyze themselves, denominations have looked to sociologists to tell them what has happened.

But burdened by committees or ill-equipped leadership, no denomination has been able to capitalize on this information to any degree.

Self-analysis tools like Natural Church Development reveal across denominational lines that Canadian Christians have a concept of God that is essentially a theistic view of a divine clockmaker who created the cosmos and then went on vacation.

A relationship with Jesus the Messiah? Not so much. Even among self-identified evangelicals, Jesus is more of a rule-maker than close friend.

So I encourage you to read our cover story by Rev. Dr. John-Peter Smit. "Best Practices" is corporate-speak the church needs to hear.

Smit's analysis of the church is as penetrating as Berton's, if a little more pastoral. But he also provides some clear guidelines based on consumer analysis and marketing for how the church can emerge from the current crisis, survive and grow. Embrace it! ■

David Harris is the Record's *editor and publisher. dharris@presbyterian.ca*

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Letters

write to us

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU. EMAIL YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS ISSUE TO: **letters@presbyterianrecord.ca**

Moving the Spirit

Re A Different Kind of Strength, April

Excellent! Excellent! I look forward to May's Part 2.

SUSAN CONLY, VIA EMAIL

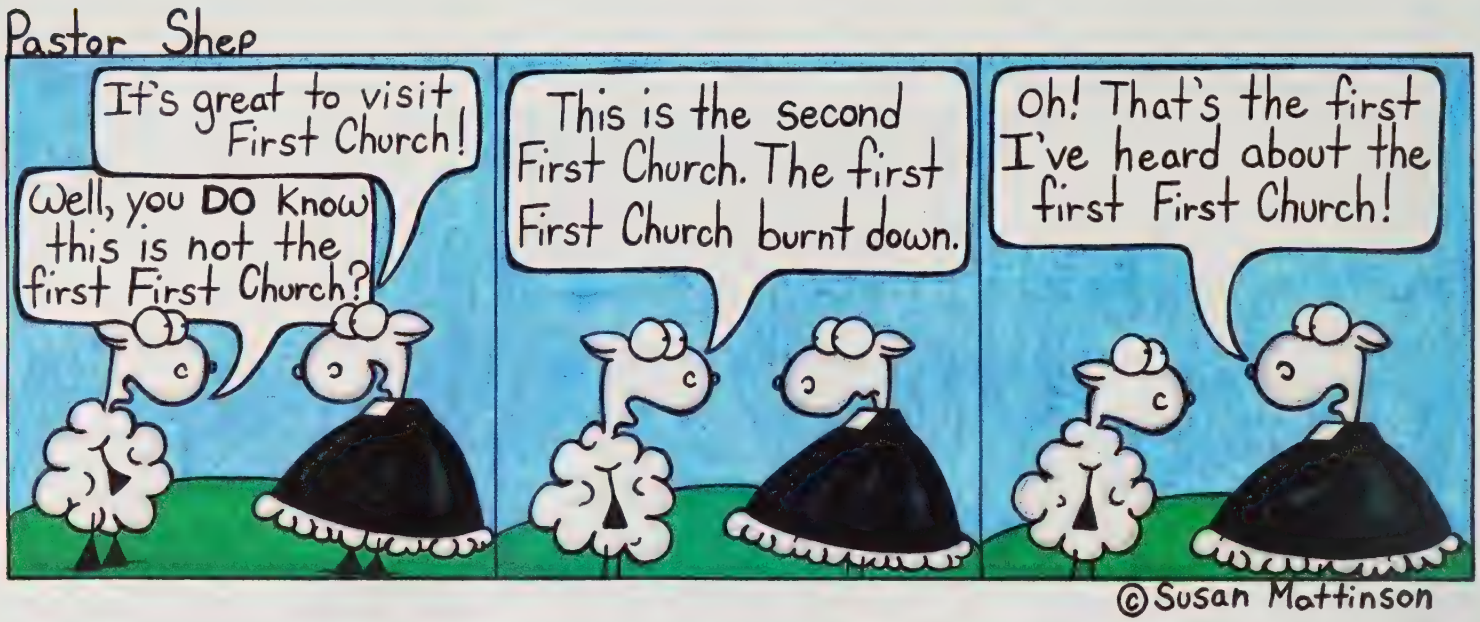
It is self-evident that the traditional church, as it is called, has been culturally captive. Show up at many of our churches on Remembrance Day and you'll see this very clearly. And some of what is being done in new models of church is an attempt to move beyond such cultural captivity. But my suspicion is that, in the name of all things expedient, these new forms simply exchange one form of cultural captivity (Victorian institution) for another form (individualistic, consumer-oriented, management, etc.) And just as the Victorian institutions are collapsing (see the Boy Scouts and Presbyterian Church) so there is every likelihood that the vacuousness of contemporary culture will be discovered for what it is and that people will simply move on from these churches when they reach that point of realization, and we will once again be left with empty churches. (Except they won't be pre-1950 vintage church buildings, they will be post-1990 vintage church buildings.) I think if we were a little more theologically and culturally circumspect, and had greater trust in the moving of the Spirit, our church growth strategies would be more tentative and humble.

ROLAND DE VRIES, ONLINE COMMENT

Theology For Clergy Only

Re Reading the Bible, April

I've always considered that Jesus of Nazareth, although born into a particular culture in his incarnation, transcends any and every culture. His mission and teaching as recorded in our gospels are as relevant for me today as they were 2,000 years ago for the people of that culture and all other cultures in-between. But if Rev. Gordon is saying that I must view his teaching as a "theological discussion" between a tax collector, a fisherman and a doctor and his incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection as "voices within different contexts asking different questions" then ➤



I've lost my relationship with God; only professors of history and theologians can enter the Kingdom. This isn't what I hear Jesus saying.

BILL DUTHIE, AURORA, ONT.

Support the Mission

Re Community of Compassion, March

Somehow I doubt Jesus' offer of hope is in a "fashionable, artsy district." Yes, he offers hope; is it not rather the congregations which choose how and where they support that mission?

JOAN MCKAY, PRINCE GEORGE, B.C.

A Cause and a Leader

Re Trusting and Trying, April

As I read this article I was amazed at why I really joined Westminster, Barrie, Ont. It was to belong. Once I joined, I felt complete. Now I am the ship out in the water trying to do what I was built for. Thank you for showing me the way. It is about Jesus, but Rev. Ruttan is the teacher helping me to understand God's words and way to live.

CORRY WILLEMS, ONLINE COMMENT

Although this is about Westminister, many of the key points are applicable in all aspects of our lives and apply to things we need to consider as we identify and commit to what is important to each of us. Nothing brings people together like an important cause and a leader they believe in to rally and guide them in tough times. Westminster seems to have gotten that piece right. I particularly liked the comment about the need to be excellent; we have become complacent, and mediocrity has unfortunately become a norm for many.

I couldn't agree more with the importance of embracing those who are different than us and having the courage to welcome and engage them as we all learn and grow from these experiences.

AMANDA HUDSWELL, ONLINE COMMENT

Prayer and Learning

Re Future of Theological Colleges, News, March

Perhaps the true revolution is within beloved and blessed community. The home congregation where one receives the call, where elders and the minister provide the mentoring and spiritual direction, where technology is leveraged to provide the foundational learnings, and the congregation and aspirant share the cost of quarterly conferences to gather students together for prayer, fellowship and

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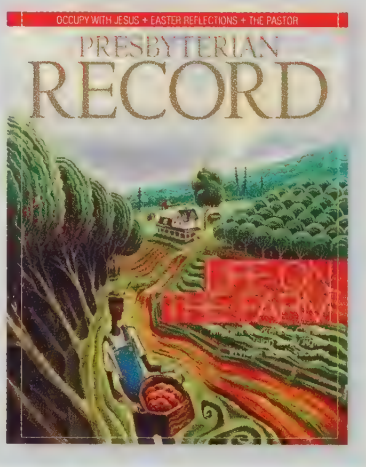

specialized learning. A true hybrid of the monastic and apprenticeship models? It also allows congregations to begin growing into places that clergy are a part of, not employed by, so they can also learn how to work in community to keep clergy healthy and get a fuller understanding of how they are also ministers of the gospel.

TY RAGAN, ONLINE COMMENT

God Provides

Re Love Talk, The Messy Table, Blog

Isn't it neat and awesome that God calls us where we are and provides us with amazing love to show us where we could be? We've been sitting with a friend who is dying but just doesn't want to leave yet. This has been a time of reflecting over our friend's life. Looking back over his 88 years, we've heard stories of how his life seemed to change in a minute. He doesn't know why. But we see how God has been instrumental in providing him with a wonderful life of imagination, inspiration and compassion for all peoples. His life has not been easy but he shared these three gifts with everyone he met, willingly and with great joy. Blessed be God who gives love unconditionally.

LORNA BALL, ONLINE COMMENT

Pastoral Responsibility

Re Minding the Minister, March

Fred Stewart encourages "presbyteries to take their pastoral responsibilities seriously." In my experience this is an area where presbyteries tend to fail miserably, particularly when the minister is in the midst of a highly stressful ministry relationship with a combative session rife with gossip and other dysfunctional behaviour, all of which lead the minister into burnout territory, or the isolation of being beat-up emotionally and spiritually. Rather than offer critical pastoral support, which may mean reprimanding sessions or individual members, presbyteries tend to don the oversight role of the court and come down hard on the minister. One final word, or should I say question. Across the nation how many presbyteries ignore the ministers on the appendix rather than reach out pastorally? I'm afraid our polity may not be set up for mutual support but rather clergy competitiveness and excessive discipline. I have sensed a much different and encouraging approach in attending local United Church presbytery meetings.

DAVID M. CRAWFORD, ONLINE COMMENT

Correction

The Woman of Faith Award noted in April News is a joint venture between the Women in Ministry Committee (Ministry and Church Vocations) and the Women's Missionary Society. The committee overseeing the award is a combination of representatives from both organizations. ■

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Your Turn

SO, LET ME ASK YOU ... **BY ANDREW FAIZ**

So, let me ask you ...

I've been writing this column for nearly a decade and have been the *Record*'s managing editor for over eight years. The magazine and the church it serves have both changed a lot over these years, and it has been a thrilling and also frustrating process of telling the stories of an institution in flux. Some of those stories have touched you, while some others have made you angry. We have tried to be faithful to our calling as Christians and as journalists throughout. We've done better more days than not, I think.

In short, as well as we've done (or think we've done) there is always room for improvement; and, this is where you come in: What would you like this magazine to look like?

We have travelled the globe in the magazine, via missionaries and our own staff. We have tackled big issues. And many small ones. We have told some great good news stories of how congregations and individuals are transforming themselves and the church. We have tried to travel across Canada as well, but, curiously, it is sometimes easier (and cheaper) to get a story from Africa than it is from the far north, for example, or the central Prairies.

We have shied away from issues of sexuality and gender. Readers get riled on either side of the political spectrum; they say nasty things to each other and subscriptions are cancelled en masse. It has made us overcautious; but, is it time to talk about this in our church?

In March when both the worldwide Roman Catholics and Anglicans were naming new leaders, the secular press was filled with criticisms against the church around issues of gender and sexuality. Since we're a modest and quiet denomination, we have been spared that glare. Still, this is what our world is talking about; should we as well?

> We are ageing and shrinking, but are we shrinking into ourselves? Are we so anxious we are exhausted?

I understand the critique that there is much more to our faith than sex. Yes there is; but, that critique also keeps us from talking about this one small slice of an issue. I think particularly of those folks who are gay but still come to worship because they want a personal relationship with Christ despite the derision of the church at large. Can we talk with them, hear them, or is the conversation only about ordination and marriage? Can we talk about this?

And what of race and culture? If we were ever a purely Scottish church, as we like to pretend at times, we aren't that anymore. The world is changing us; we need to share those stories.

And what of all our other differences? Can our liberals not talk to our conservatives? For such a small group, we sure do seem to have a lot of divisions.

And what of that other divide: Between the pews and the pulpits? Can we talk about our struggles with sessions and presbyteries?

Within our denomination every stalwart worker, in the pews, in the pulpit, within the courts and the offices, is overextended. We are ageing and shrinking, but are we shrinking into ourselves? Are we so anxious we are exhausted? Are we tired of visioning? It seems at times some of us just want to go quietly into the good night; while others are busy shuffling the furniture. There are some of us who have faced these tombstone times with missional thinking.

So, I ask you to share your stories, your thoughts about the Presbyterian Church, your congregation, your own faith journey. And also ideas about what you would like the magazine to do more of and less. An excellent way to share your thoughts is to join the conversation following this article at presbyterianrecord.ca.

I've been talking for a decade; I'd like to hear what you have to say. ■

Andrew Faiz is the Record*'s managing editor.*

Pension Board Explores Options

SUGGESTS LETTERS OF CREDIT TO DEAL WITH DEFICIT. **BY CONNIE WARDLE**

Faced with a $45-million deficit in the church's pension fund, the Pension and Benefits Board is exploring options for how best to deal with the liabilities.

The shortfall has grown from $900,000 in 2008 to $45 million in 2012, primarily because interest rates have stayed at historic lows.

A fund's liabilities are the benefits that have been promised to employees and retirees versus its assets, which are its investment returns or how much money is invested in the fund.

When a fund is evaluated, actuaries determine whether if it were to wrap up abruptly on a given day, it would be able to provide all members with their pension benefits in a single lump payout. This is called solvency funding.

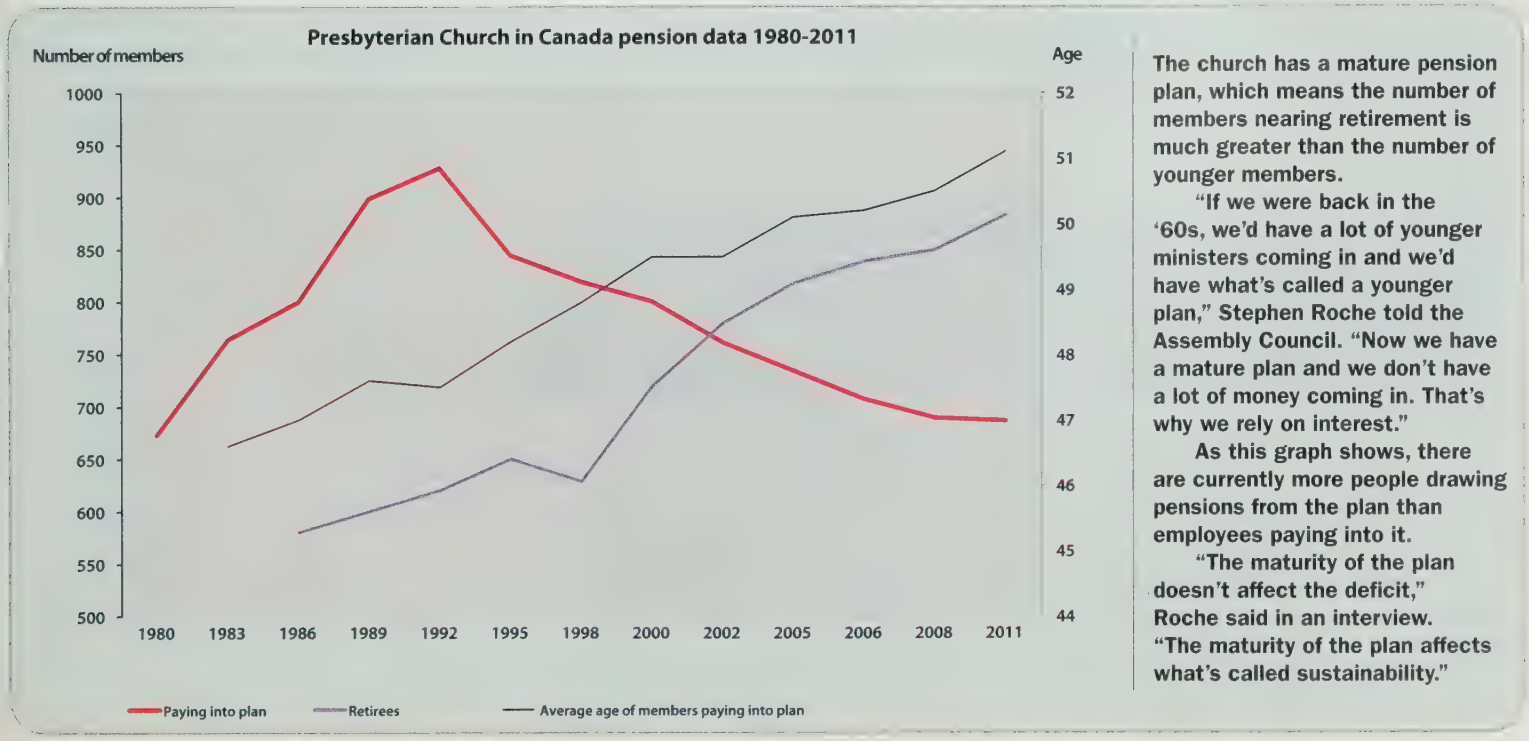
Most single employer defined benefit plans, like the one the church has, have "significant solvency shortfalls," said Hugh O'Reilly, head of the pension benefits and insolvency practice at the Toronto law firm Cavalluzzo Hayes Shilton McIntyre and Cornish LLP.

"Solvency funding is extremely sensitive to interest rates," he said. "So what's happened is, certainly for about the last 15 years and since the financial meltdown [in 2008], there's been extraordinary pressure on 30-year bond rates. They've gone down. As bond rates go down, the value of the liabilities go up. And what that does is it creates the solvency deficiency."

To fund its solvency deficit, the church would need to find an additional $400,000 a month or $4.8 million a year for 10 years starting in the first quarter of 2014.

Yet funding the deficit with additional cash payments may not be the best course of action, said Stephen Roche, the church's chief financial officer. If interest rates go up in the future, the deficit will shrink.

"Let's say we scoured the church for $60 or $70 million and we put it into the pension plan; and then ➤



The church has a mature pension plan, which means the number of members nearing retirement is much greater than the number of younger members.

"If we were back in the '60s, we'd have a lot of younger ministers coming in and we'd have what's called a younger plan," Stephen Roche told the Assembly Council. "Now we have a mature plan and we don't have a lot of money coming in. That's why we rely on interest."

As this graph shows, there are currently more people drawing pensions from the plan than employees paying into it.

"The maturity of the plan doesn't affect the deficit," Roche said in an interview. "The maturity of the plan affects what's called sustainability."

Some Definitions

In a **defined benefit plan**, members are promised a monthly benefit when they retire that is based on how much they earned and how many years they served—not on the fund's investment returns.

Assets are the fund's investments. **Liabilities** are the costs of providing pension benefits to members now and in the future.

If the assets are greater than the liabilities, the plan has a surplus. If, on the other hand, the liabilities are greater than the assets, the plan has a deficit.

A **solvency valuation** assumes a pension plan will wind up abruptly on a given day. It determines whether or not a plan's assets would be sufficient to provide an immediate payout of the benefits members have earned.

A **going concern valuation** assumes a pension plan will continue to operate indefinitely. It determines whether or not the plan's assets will be able to provide pensions for members in the years to come.

Because solvency and going concern valuations look at the same pension plan in different ways, it is possible to have a going concern surplus and a solvency deficit, for example.

in four years we find out we have a $20-million surplus [because interest rates have increased and the solvency deficit has shrunk as a result]," explained Roche. "That didn't serve the church well."

"You just can't take money out of the pension plan," he said, noting there are regulations in place for dealing with surpluses.

Instead of funding the deficit with special payments, the pension board is considering using letters of credit to cover the shortfall in the short- to medium-term.

A letter of credit is a guarantee from a bank or financial institution—usually underwritten by a pledge of assets on the part of the organization seeking to secure the letters of credit—that, in the event of a bankruptcy or sudden wind-up, it would provide the amount of money that has been stipulated.

Banks charge a fee for the letters of credit they issue. Legally, this fee cannot be covered by the funds in the pension plan, so the church must find the money for the fee elsewhere.

"Four hundred thousand dollars a month is $4.8 million a year. That's what you'd have to pay into the pension plan to cover the solvency deficit," said Roche. "If I take a letter of credit for that $4.8 million and it's at one per cent, that's $48,000 [a year]. Instead of paying $4.8 million I paid $48,000, waiting for when interest rates go up and the problem becomes much more manageable. And then what we'd be able to do is slowly surrender those letters of credit."

The pension board plans to seek approval from the General Assembly, which will meet from May 31 to June 3, to negotiate letters of credit.

The board does not believe the church can go bankrupt suddenly and therefore, the board argues, it should be exempt from solvency funding requirements.

"The windup calculation is artificial because the Presbyterian Church cannot simply go bankrupt in a day or a month or a year," said Roche. "In essence the Presbyterian Church has assets which far exceed any pension deficit if we went bankrupt."

The funds that appear on the national church's balance sheet are only "the tip of the iceberg," he said. The church's total assets include the buildings and funds managed by the congregations across the country.

"If you were to take the balance sheet of all the assets of the church, it's massive. If we're one employer, which we are, then the coverage of this if we go bankrupt is not going to be a problem."

The board is exploring possible ways to restructure the plan and then petition the government of Ontario, where the plan is registered, to exempt it from solvency funding requirements. This could prove to be a multi-year process, the board said.

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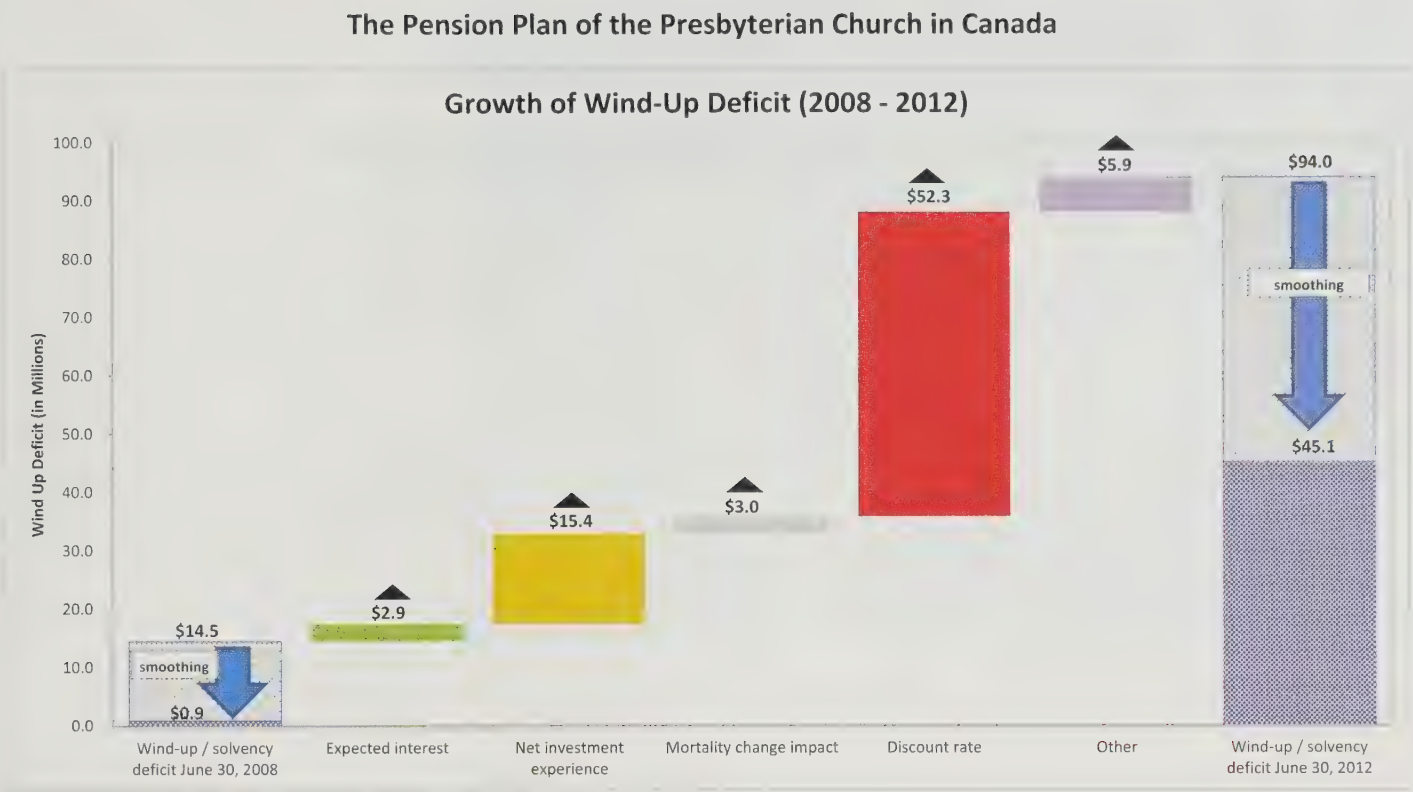

This graph created by Eckler Ltd., the church's actuaries, shows how the solvency deficit in the pension plan grew between 2008 and 2012. The discount rate, which is caused by low interest rates, makes up the lion's share of the deficit. The actuaries have used an accounting practice called "smoothing," an averaging method meant to stabilize short term fluctuations in market value. If interest rates remain low in the years ahead, there will be less to "smooth" and as a result the deficit will be higher.

At press time, the board was looking into what would be required to create a jointly sponsored pension plan. In a JSPP, employers and employees share governance and risk. This type of plan would be governed by 50 per cent employers and 50 per cent employees; employers and employees would each contribute 50 per cent of the plan's funds; and, if there was a deficit, each group would be responsible for half.

"You'll see other pension plans looking at 50/50 risk models as well because it seems to be something that is affordable, and so I'm imagining there are all sorts of hybrid solutions for specific plans," said Judy Haas, the board's senior administrator.

The board is in the early stages of its investigation and are working out how a JSPP might work in the context of the church. They may bring recommendations regarding a JSPP or another type of plan in the future, if they decide it is a wise course to take.

"It's a tricky walk that we make," said Tom Fischer, convener of the pension board. "There are a number of factors working here as we move forward to determine what we can be and what we should be." ■

Connie Wardle is the Record's *staff writer.*

Going Concern Funding

Pension funds must ensure they can provide current and future pensions to members as the plan continues to operate. This is known as going concern funding.

The church's plan had a going concern deficit of $7.1 million in 2012. That was an improvement from a $10 million deficit in 2011.

Stephen Roche said increases to the mandatory contributions made by ministers and churches, as well as other church employers and employees, "are going a long way" to address the going concern deficit. The increases took effect in January.

Additional donations or bequests from members of the church could also "really help us," said Tom Fischer, convener of the pension board. "Independent funding coming through the door could certainly do nothing but help the pension plan itself."

Assembly Council Prepares for Future

MARCH MEETING FOCUSES ON DISCERNMENT AS CHURCH PRIORITIZES FUNDING.

BY CONNIE WARDLE

The Assembly Council's March meeting began with presentations from three ministers working in thriving churches. It continued with a time of silence the next morning; and times of discernment and prayer were woven throughout the two days of business and reports.

The focus on discernment came from a motion passed at the November 2012 meeting, which asked for "a time of sacred discernment on God's will for our church" at the next meeting.

"All of the decision-making at Assembly Council seeks to be guided and led by God's will for the church," the planning group said in its brief report. "It is the council's hope and prayer that a vision and mission statement for the Presbyterian Church in Canada will grow out of this process of discernment."

As the final time for discernment wound to its close, Heather Crisp, convener, said she was glad the council "didn't decide to finish and put a bow" on the process by creating a statement to bring to this year's assembly. Instead, the council opted to report on what has been done so far and allow the process to continue.

> 'Departments will be amalgamated, and work consolidated. At the same time all the programs, particularly in Canadian Ministries, that support congregations will remain a top priority'

In the past few years, calls for a national vision and renewed focus on congregations have resonated on the floor of the General Assembly.

A series of overtures asked the council, which is responsible for carrying out the assembly's work throughout the year, to create a plan to restructure national organizations and finances so they are sustainable in a time of shrinking revenues and struggling congregations.

At its November 2012 meeting, the Assembly Council approved a set of budget principles to be used in planning the church's finances beginning in 2014. These include moving to biennial assemblies and reducing the expected income from Presbyterians Sharing, the main mission and ministry fund of the national church.

Matters of vision, structure and the renewal of congregations "have been in the forefront" as it crafted the budget principles, the council said in its finance committee report. "Of course during a time in which the need to significantly reduce expenditures is very real, this is difficult work."

2014 BUDGET

"The 2014 budget is only one step in the process of shifting the structures of the church to best meet the needs of the denomination during a time of reduced resources," reads the report of the finance committee. "From 2011 through 2016 it is envisioned that there will be approximately 12 per cent fewer staff supported by Presbyterians Sharing (this will be achieved through retirements). Departments will be amalgamated, and work consolidated. At the same time all the programs, particularly in Canadian Ministries, that support congregations will remain a top priority. Funds related to renewing and developing new congregations remain available, and increased funds for conferences and local initiatives will also be made available to the church." The budget will be presented to General Assembly when it meets May 31st to June 3rd.

BIENNIAL ASSEMBLIES

The proposed budget assumes bien-

ATTENTION: NANCY
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If the name **James Murray** means something to you, please contact Valerie at 416-518-5402 or valeriemharris@hotmail.com. Not an urgent matter.

nial General Assemblies will begin in 2016. "This leaves sufficient time to make sure that appropriate legislation is in place, and that committees of the church, staff at the national office and the church at large is ready for this change," the executive committee of the council said.

Each meeting of the church's highest court costs about $300,000, although the expense varies depending on where the assembly is held and how far the majority of commissioners must travel.

The council plans to ask this year's General Assembly to approve a proposal for biennial assemblies in principle. The proposal document will be circulated to the committees and courts of the church for study and report. Changes to church polity would still need to be approved by future assemblies.

In response to a report circulated in 2009, 69 courts and national committees supported biennial assemblies and 52 were opposed. The council at that time decided to reaffirm the practice of annual assemblies and the General Assembly agreed.

Rev. Dr. Rick Horst, minister of St. Andrew's, Barrie, Ont., and moderator of the 2011 assembly, said he had changed his mind about the biennial meetings. He suggested meeting annually may not be good stewardship of resources and may not be necessary "in a day when communication is so immediate."

Rev. Dr. John Vissers, moderator of the 2012 assembly, suggested the council should now "test the will of the church" by putting its proposal forward this year. "I think we should let the church decide," he said.

The Presbytery of Vancouver Island has offered to host the 2015 General Assembly. ➤

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REGIONAL PROGRAMMING

The Women's Missionary Society announced 2014 will be the last year it will provide $200,000 for synods to use for regional staff or programs.

"We did look at our financial situation and the original purpose of regional staff before we made that decision," said Joan Smith, outgoing president of the WMS. "At that time they [the regional staff] took over for what was called our educational consultants, so the focus was on education. Now we're focused more on mission and justice, so it doesn't really fit in with what the WMS does."

The Life and Mission Agency has provided about $500,000 a year in addition to the WMS' $200,000 to help synods hire staff people to work with the churches and presbyteries within their bounds. Late last year, the LMA and WMS agreed to allow synods that wish to do so to use the funds for conferences or other programs instead of staff salaries and travel expenses.

The LMA's grant for regional resourcing is calculated each year and divided among the synods using a formula developed by the synod conveners in 2009. The LMA plans to continue to provide the grant.

Smith reported that a finance and future task force was created at the WMS' May executive council meeting. Its conclusions "will have a major impact on the WMS," she said.

PRESBYTERIANS SHARING

The council's guiding principles included lowering the budgeted revenue from Presbyterians Sharing, the main mission and ministry fund of the national church, to $7.5 million in 2014, down from $8 million in 2013.

The majority of departments of the LMA that rely on Presbyterians Sharing donations have trimmed their budgets for 2014.

Some of those reductions include:

- Canadian Ministries' funding to university chaplaincy programs is expected to discontinue in 2014. "This decision is related to declining revenue, and in no way comments on the valuable work done on campuses by chaplains," Rev. Ian McDonald, the associate secretary, wrote in a letter to university chaplains and others. Two dozen chaplaincies receive grants of up to $5,000 a year from Canadian Ministries. The LMA has asked the department to work with presbyteries and synods to find alternative sources of funding.
- $18,000 is to be cut from an annual grant to Kairos, an ecumenical social justice group. The grant administered through Justice Ministries is expected to be $42,700 in 2014.
- The Communications office is reducing its quarterly PCPak to three mailings each year. The resources and materials contained in the PCPak are available on the Presbyterian Church's website where they can be downloaded and printed on demand.
- The budget for International Ministries has been reduced, for the most part, through salary expenses as missionaries retired or returned to Canada.

A NEW FORMULA

A new formula for calculating suggested allocations to Presbyterians Sharing will be presented to the assembly. Based on the biblical idea of tithing, it will ask each congregation to contribute 10 per cent of their dollar base (or the congregation's income in a given year, minus any money donated to missions or used to repay debts.)

If all congregations contributed 10 per cent of their dollar bases, it would raise about $10 million each year.

The current formula is also based on a congregation's dollar base, but many consider the suggested allocations to be unreasonable. Currently, congregations are asked for 13 per cent of the first $50,000, 18 per cent of the next $50,000 and 21.5 per cent of the remainder.

If all congregations met their current suggested allocations, the national fund would receive about $18 million a year.

THE EAP AND CONFERENCES

The LMA agreed to extend the Employee Assistance Program until 2017 using $62,500 from two of the agency's five mission connection funds—the growing churches fund and the mission connections fund.

The EAP provides ministers, church employees and their families with confidential counseling about a variety of concerns such as stress, depression, relationships and financial and legal matters.

Assembly Council also gave permission for the LMA to move $300,000 to the conference support fund, which was depleted at the end of 2012. The money will be moved from the renewing ministries capital fund, which helps congregations seeking to renew their ministries through a capital project. That fund had a balance of over $2.6 million at the end of 2012.

"The Assembly Council remains committed to listening to the church and values not only the kind of input it has received through the 2014 budget process but further input from the church on all of these matters," it said in the finance report. ■

Connie Wardle is the Record's *staff writer.*

Community News

Delegates to the United Nations General Assembly April 2, 2013 applaud the passage of the first UN treaty regulating the international arms trade.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Ploughshares Applauds Treaty

PROJECT PLOUGHSHARES, a peace and justice NGO supported by the Presbyterian Church, celebrated the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty at the United Nations' General Assembly in April.

Canada voted with the majority to pass the treaty, which seeks to control the $70-billion global arms trade. There were 154 delegates who voted in favour of the treaty, while Iran, Syria and North Korea voted against it. There were also 23 abstentions. Civil society is now waiting to see if Canada will be one of the first to sign the treaty when it opens for signatures on June 3.

A first of its kind, and the first time the UN has agreed to a major treaty to control conventional weapons since the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, it is being praised by many as a much needed start to protecting vulnerable people; however, it does have its limits.

"The scope of the treaty is limited to seven major combat weapons categories plus, very importantly, small arms and light weapons. These categories do not include much standard military equipment such as military transport vehicles, counterinsurgency aircraft and drones," said Ken Epps, Ploughshares' senior program officer. "States are encouraged, however, to apply treaty provisions to 'the broadest range of conventional arms.'"

Stephen Allen, the Presbyterian Church's associate secretary of Justice Ministries, noted that Project Ploughshares has worked "tirelessly and persistently since 1998 with governments in pursuing this Arms Trade Treaty," and encouraged Presbyterians to get involved: "The treaty will enter into force 90 days after the 50th country signs and ratifies it. I encourage members of the Presbyterian Church to urge their Members of Parliament to support Canada signing the treaty." ■ —*Amy MacLachlan*

Record to Hire Major Gifts Officer

THE PRESBYTERIAN RECORD is planning to hire a major gifts/planned giving officer over the summer. David Harris, the magazine's publisher, said donor generosity makes it the perfect time to give people another way to support the *Record's* ministry.

"We see growth opportunities," said Harris, "and we are excited about the possibilities this position will bring."

Details are still being worked on, but interested readers are encouraged to email the *Record* with a little information about themselves.

Send to dleader@presbyterian.ca

Topping Honoured

REV. DR. RICHARD TOPPING, a professor at St. Andrew's Hall at the Vancouver School of Theology, was honoured by both his students and colleagues, being named VST's new principal and receiving a Just Desserts award for his outstanding contributions to student life.

His new position as principal is effective July 1.

"[Dr. Richard Topping] challenges his students to be the best they can be and has the utmost care for their well-being," according to a statement read at the awards ceremony on behalf of VST students. "He is committed to the education of his students because of his love for theology, for his belief that theology makes a difference."

He is the first professor from VST to receive the award.

Topping came to VST in 2009, after serving the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul in Montreal since 1997.

He is currently professor of studies in the Reformed tradition, and said he will continue teaching despite his ➤

'Five years ago, the churches didn't see the violence coming. Then they remained silent when all the horrible things happened'
—Rick Allen, PCC mission staff

new responsibilities.

"I love when the lights go on," said Topping. "Once students learn the explanatory depth and power of interpreting the world, the church and their own lives by means of the gospel it is quite powerful." ■ —*AM*

Kenya's Future Still Uncertain

DESPITE A MOSTLY PEACEFUL election in Kenya last March, newly elected president Uhuru Kenyatta has been summoned for trial for "crimes against humanity," leaving Kenya's political future uncertain.

Kenyatta, son of Kenya's founding president Jomo Kenyatta, defeated Raila Odinga by a margin of 8,000 votes. Odinga contested the results, appealing to the newly created Supreme Court. Amidst worries of ensuing violence, both leaders urged Kenyans to keep the peace and respect the appeal process.

After the court confirmed Kenyatta was indeed president there was some unrest, but it ended after two days.

Five years earlier, the story was drastically different. When President Mwai Kibaki was sworn in amidst allegations of election fraud, violence erupted across the country. More than 1,300 people were killed. Over 300,000 were displaced. Kenya's economy, one of the strongest in Africa, took a nosedive.

But this election would be different, officials promised.

"The Kenyan people are quite proud that the process was peaceful," said Dr. Rick Allen, a PCC mission staff person stationed in Nairobi.

"Part of it is trust in the new constitution," said Allen, referring to the charter Kofi Annan helped draft with Kibaki and Odinga in a power-sharing deal to end the violence in 2007.

Another contributing factor was the involvement of church leaders.

"Five years ago the churches didn't see the violence coming. Then they remained silent when all the horrible things happened. Later they officially apologized for their inaction," he said.

Allen expressed optimism, but said he worries about how the West will treat Kenya in the near future, now that Kenyatta has been indicted by the International Criminal Court for "crimes against humanity" in connection with the violence that took place after the 2007 elections. ■ —*Seth Veenstra*

CIDA Merges with DFAIT

CIDA, CANADA'S ONCE-INDEPENDENT international development agency, has been folded into the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade by the Conservative government.

The amalgamation was announced in March in tandem with the new federal budget. In an official statement, Julian Fantino, minister for international cooperation, explained the merger would "put development on equal footing with trade and diplomacy."

While most agree alleviating poverty is ultimately beneficial to the economies of Canada and its international partners, many critics question how much emphasis will be put on "advancing Canadian interests."

"We need to understand if 'Canadian interests' runs counter to a pro-poor policy," said Ken Kim, director of Presbyterian World Service and Development.

"We would not use any Presbyterian donation in a way that runs counter to our beliefs as Presbyterians. Similarly, we wouldn't seek or accept CIDA funding if the conditions required are counter to our beliefs."

And while Kim said funding for PWS&D's current five- and three-year projects will continue, the long-term future is less certain.

"The big question now is how our relationship with CIDA will proceed. We're in a wait-and-see position," said Kim. ■ —*SV*

Ghanaian to Receive E.H. Johnson Award

REV. DR. ABRAHAM BERINYUU, an associate professor at the University for Development Studies in Ghana and a member of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, will receive this year's E.H. Johnson Award for service on the cutting edge of mission.

"Abraham is a genuine Christian servant. He stands firmly on the solid rock of his faith and makes no apology," said Rick Fee, general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency and a personal friend of Berinyuu's. "He is bold to speak for those dispossessed and for those who need guidance and help ... He has championed those who are disabled and advocated on their behalf."

Childhood polio left Berinyuu partially disabled, making it difficult to do mission work in any context.

"The people we choose ... help us push forward and broaden our sense of mission. They're doing something new and exciting; they're making a difference, working in areas that are not necessarily mainstream," Rev. Duncan Jeffrey, convener of the E.H. Johnson Committee, told the *Record*.

Berinyuu is also researching traditional African medicine, exploring the church's relationship with that kind of healing and is working to build stronger relationships between Christians and Muslims in the area.

The Dr. E.H. Johnson Memorial Fund was established in 1981 to continue Johnson's commitment to a global view of mission. This year's award will be presented at a luncheon during General Assembly in Toronto. ■ —*AM & SV*

Justice Comes Slowly to Pakistan's Prisoners

ONE MINISTER'S FIGHT FOR CHRISTIAN INMATES. **BY SETH VEENSTRA**

Pakistan's blasphemy law made international news again in March when a mob burned Christian homes in the Joseph Colony, Lahore, after a local man accused of insulting Islam was arrested.

The event reminded the world how dangerous it is to be a Christian living in Pakistan. Peaceful existence is tenuous. Any day a person could be falsely accused, arrested and held in prison until trial. Or worse: suffer the mob's justice.

In Pakistan an accusation is enough to make an arrest. That's what happened to Rehmat Masiah, 75, who was accused of blasphemy after a land dispute went sour.

Separated from the general population of inmates, he was held in the same cellblock as murderers awaiting execution. A prison guard stayed with him each night to ensure fellow inmates wouldn't kill him.

Masiah was in prison nearly 18 months before charges were dismissed. His appeal was spearheaded by Rev. Samson Javed, a Presbyterian minister.

Rev. Samson Javed, right, celebrates the opening of a barrack for Christian inmates at District Jail, Faisalabad, Pakistan. Kahwaja Muhammad Islam, a member of provincial assembly, cuts the ribbon.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF PBCI

Born and raised in Pakistan, Javed worked for more than 10 years in prison ministry. He became involved in the ministry after visiting Christian inmates awaiting execution.

"There were about 15 Christians there. I asked if they would sing a hymn with me in Urdu." As the men joined voices with Javed, they turned over the plastic meal bowls and started drumming along.

"It was so moving. I started crying —how they were playing the plastic bowls and singing—I cannot explain. These people, who are waiting for their death and how they are singing and crying in front of the Lord: that moved me to jump into this ministry. That was the day I said, 'yes, I need to do something for all these people.' I went many times after."

At the time, he was executive secretary of the Pakistan Bible Correspondence Institute, an organization that provides online Bible education for people who want to discretely learn more about the Christian faith. Under Javed's leadership, PBCI had been expanding its ministry by providing food and disaster relief to Pakistanis. He helped create a prison ministries initiative under PBCI's social justice wing.

After his initial encounter with Christian inmates, Javed began to make weekly visits to the Faisalabad District Jail. Besides those charged under the blasphemy law, there were many ➤

Christians facing lesser charges who were held with the general population. Javed said the prison can hold up to 400 prisoners; at any given time there are 80 to 120 who are Christian.

"When I visited, there would be 80 to 100 waiting for me in a very small room. And I would preach and we would worship together. And then there would be people waiting in line to talk to me—they just wanted to share their story. And that was something, you know. It was relief to them, that someone heard."

"One day it was very hot. It was only nine o'clock in the morning. The summer is very hot in our country. And in this small place I saw that people were sitting in the sun, but were trying to put their heads in the shade. I asked them to stand. I said, 'let us pray God will give us a place were we can sit nicely and worship Him.'"

Javed began talking to the prison's superintendent about building a chapel. He received permission three months later. After another three months, the chapel was built. That was in 2009.

Javed said it's common for Christians to be denied space to sleep

"Now every day from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. they can go in there. Read the Bible. Pray. It was a miracle."

It was also sneaky.

Officially, the chapel is called a "library." Javed learned from the superintendent that if they called the building a chapel, they wouldn't get the approval necessary to start construction.

Two years later, Javed and a group of his ecumenical colleagues convinced the superintendent to build a separate wing for Christian inmates.

Unlike inmates charged under the blasphemy law, Christians charged or convicted for smaller crimes are often held in open spaces where other inmates can easily bully them. Javed said it's common for Christians to be denied space to sleep. In some cases they are pressured to convert to Islam as a way of avoiding further persecution.

Again, Javed and the superintendent needed to tread carefully while making plans for the separate wing. In order to avoid accusations of favouritism, which could provoke extremists, they made sure the wing was not exclusively Christian; instead, the majority of the inmates would be Christians.

On Dec. 5, 2011 the District Jail of Faisalabad opened its first Christian wing. It's located next to the chapel and accommodates about 120 inmates.

When asked why he was so successful in making these changes, Javed responded, "Because I worked alongside other people. I gathered all denominations and said, 'yes, we are all together on this.' And I worked with the superintendent of the prison and human rights activists, too."

Today Javed, his wife and three children live in Canada. They arrived May 2012 as refugees.

"Things were very bad for me. I had to leave the country. My life was in danger. My family's life was in danger as well."

He works night shifts at a superstore a block away from the church's national offices in Toronto. When he isn't working there he volunteers at the Daily Bread Food Bank and preaches when and where he can, in English or Urdu, on television, at conferences, in churches.

And he continues to visit prisoners. ■

Seth Veenstra is the Record's *staff writer.*

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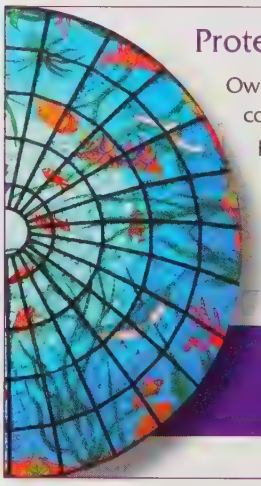

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Theology 101

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OUR FEATURE ON LIVING FAITH

Living Faith is a declaration of faith of the Presbyterian Church. You can download it at presbyterian.ca. We suggest you read the passage being discussed each month.

ADDITIONAL READING: Can We Doubt? (April 2013). The article can be found at presbyterianrecord.ca.

Maturing Your Faith

LEARNING FROM DOUBT. **BY DAVID SHERBINO**

LIVING FAITH 6 (FAITH AND DOUBT)

Is it possible that faith and doubt can exist together? It seems we have faith and then challenges arise and we are filled with doubts. A few years ago on an adventure holiday, I tried zip-lining. I am not very comfortable with heights. I love to fly in airplanes, but to look over the ledge of a high building is another story. I went to the zip-line centre, was given instructions, strapped into a harness, and suddenly found myself standing on the edge of a platform hundreds of feet above the earth. I had to make a choice. Would I go back to the parking area or would I trust myself to the process? The term "leap of faith" came to mind. ➤

As we consider our faith and wrestle with our doubts, we begin to focus on the one in whom our faith rests; it's all about our relationship with God

A leap of faith I discovered is not about believing that which seems impossible but rather a commitment to action in spite of my doubts. So I jumped!

It is interesting to see how many people in the Bible had serious doubts. God told childless Abram that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars in the night sky. Years passed yet there was no child. At age 99, God visited Abram and told him he would be the "father of many nations," and Sarah the mother of the same, and God changed his name from Abram to Abraham to signify this promise. When Abraham heard this he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of 90?" Abraham had serious doubts.

The angel Gabriel visited Mary and told her she would be with child by the power of the Holy Spirit and give birth to the one called the Son of God. Mary had to explain this to Joseph who did not believe what she was saying. Assuming she had been unfaithful, Joseph decided to end the relationship because he doubted Mary's story.

A man approached Jesus and pleaded with him to restore his son to health. The child was ill and had seizures which caused him to fall into open fires or into pools of water. The father told Jesus that he brought his son to the disciples but they could not heal him. When the boy was brought to Jesus he immediately began to convulse and fell to the ground foaming at the mouth. The father cried out to Jesus, "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." Jesus' response is telling. "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible to him who believes." The father exclaimed, "I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief" (Mark 9:22-24). He wanted to believe, but he had doubts.

You may find yourself among those who have doubts. To make matters more challenging, you may know some people who never question their faith; they simply believe. There are bumper stickers declaring, "God said it; I believe it, that settles it." Such statements do not allow for questions or doubts. Author Philip Yancey states, "Inquisitiveness and questioning are inevitable parts of the life of faith. Where there is certainty there is no room for faith. But we must learn to doubt our doubts as much as we doubt our faith."

So what do we do with our questions and our doubts? Is the Christian faith simply holding to specific beliefs? No! Our faith is not in creeds or doctrinal statements but in a person. John Ortberg in his book *Faith and Doubt* states, "Trust is something that happens between people. It is what holds the world of personal relationships together." The writer to the Hebrews states, "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). As we consider our faith and wrestle with our doubts we begin to focus on the one in whom our faith rests; it's all about our relationship with God. Is God trustworthy? Is God faithful to His promises? Does God care about our wellbeing? Is there evidence that God is still the unchanging one who will be with us on this journey even though our feelings may vacillate?

When life takes us through the unexpected and we begin to feel overwhelmed, doubts may surface. It is at times like this, when we have doubts, that we can grow in our faith by trusting God more and more. Is it easy? No. Is it worthwhile? Yes.

We return to the three stories. After God made the promise to Abraham, three visitors came and informed him that within the next year he and Sarah would have a child. When the child was born Sarah exclaimed, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have born him a son in his old age" (Genesis 21:7). They had their doubts, but the visitor asked Abraham one question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" This is an important question for us to consider. The writer to the Hebrews states, "By faith Abraham, even though he was past age and Sarah herself was barren, was able to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise" (Hebrews 11:11).

Joseph, filled with doubts about Mary's pregnancy, assumed his only alternative was to find a way out of the relationship. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him that the child conceived in Mary was from the Holy Spirit, so in obedience to God he took Mary to be his wife. Joseph had doubts but he acted in faith trusting what God said to be true.

The man with the sick boy had doubts and the disciples also struggled with their faith. They had been commissioned by Jesus to "heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and cast out demons" (Matthew 10:8), yet in this instance they were not able to help. When they asked why, Jesus revealed it was "because of the littleness of your faith" (Matthew 17:19-20). It's easy to claim to have faith when life is going well, but great faith develops when we choose to trust in God even when we do not understand. The disciples would learn many lessons about faith and doubt and it was through these experiences their relationship with God matured.

Do you have doubts? You're in good company. As you wrestle with your doubts let this be an opportunity for your relationship with God to grow. ■

Rev. Dr. David Sherbino teaches at Tyndale University College, Toronto.

That All May Be One

JESUS PRAYS FOR US, BUT NOT JUST US. **BY LAURENCE DEWOLFE**

Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 12, 2013

John 17:20-26

"That they may all be one ..." Those words, in Latin, are on a crest on the lobby floor at my workplace. They represent one of the school's founding denominations, born in the last half-century of Christendom, when optimistic disciples thought big was the best answer to Jesus's prayer. The best witness was one, big church. One in creed. One in worship. One in polity. It was all about documents and structures. Which is not to say it wasn't also about vision and mission. In those days, few could cast vision or imagine mission without the tangible expression of both in document and structure. This was also true for those who didn't join the new church.

I grew up in the heyday of the ecumenical movement. The banners of Christendom had fallen. Witnessing to the world—at least North America, the U.K., and Western Europe—was the main concern. We believed we could make the best witness by showing how we could live side-by-side and work together, despite our differences in creed, worship, and polity. Our theologians also set to work, behind the scenes, to try to resolve some of those differences. Whether or not the world took notice, all who joined in the movement were better for it. There's a practical ecumenism still present among congregations in our part of the world and a sharing of resources among denominations committed to social justice. These expressions of unity are issue-based, not expressions of a movement.

Christendom has fallen. Most Canadians don't go to church with any regularity, and couldn't care less about the unity of us Christians among ourselves. Neighbours may be quick to point out that there are too many churches. They may tell us we have no right to say ➤

what's right or wrong when we can't get our own act together. But that's as far as it goes. Those who do watch to see what the religious do are far more likely to notice if people of differing faiths get their act together. Christian unity, as so many of us still think of it, isn't the best witness we can offer our world.

Can we say for sure Jesus's prayer is for all of us who call ourselves by his name to belong to one, big church? Can we say for sure Jesus prays just for people we would recognize as Christians? If creed, worship and polity don't matter to Jesus, what manifestation of unity does he pray to see?

Jesus prays to his Father "that they may be one, as we are one." One in purpose. One in spirit. One in nature. As those who saw Jesus saw God, Jesus prays the world will see God, in all God's glory, in us. That calls for a bigger us than the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the three churches that founded my school, and all the other churches combined. Jesus doesn't really pray in support of our witness. He's concerned about God's glory, God's witness to the world. That doesn't mean he's not concerned about us. He's just not concerned about just "us."

He prays for those who will believe in him through the words of his first disciples. We include ourselves in that. Do we go on from there, presuming that only people who have heard the same words we've heard, make the same confession we make, call Jesus by the name we know are included with us? The fact that we hang on by just a few of the threads pulled from the rich tapestry the first generations of disciples wove suggests we're not the only people Jesus prays for. (There are, after all, the "also" people of verse 24 in the NRSV, and the "other sheep" of John 10:16.)

"That they may all be one." One in purpose. One in spirit. One in nature. Some days I feel a lot closer to my Buddhist neighbours than some of my brothers and sisters in Christ. ■

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe is on sabbatical from Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

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The Cost of Discipleship

WORKING FOR THE RESISTANCE DURING WORLD WAR II. **BY ANITA MACK**

It was on the night of my mother's 16th birthday, May 10, 1940, that the small kingdom of the Netherlands was invaded by neighbouring German troops. So instead of happy birthday greetings by family members, my mother was glumly told that morning: "It's war." It would take almost five years to the day before the Germans capitulated on May 5, 1945.

Three days after the German invasion, the Dutch army surrendered after the city of Rotterdam was bombed to rubble and Nazi rule began. At first, life seemed to go on as usual. But gradually, the German occupation began to be felt by the population as a whole and certainly by the large Jewish population of the city of Amsterdam, my mother's hometown. For centuries, many Jews had settled in the Dutch capital to find shelter from the pogroms and persecution experienced in various places. For that reason, the city was, and still is, called Mokum by its residents. The name comes from the Hebrew *mokom*, meaning "safe haven."

But a few years into the occupation, Mokum was no longer a safe place. By 1943, the year my parents became engaged, the Nazi killing machine was in full swing. In great numbers, the Jewish population was rounded up and put on transport to various death camps.

As the harshness of German rule increased, so did opposition to the regime. My father became involved in finding hiding places for Jewish refugees (children in particular) and my mother became a courier for the Dutch Resistance, which meant biking all over the country, sometimes with weapons in her saddlebags, often ➤

Above: A wartime photo of the author's parents, Nelly Lena Los-Sanders and Johannes Maarten Los.
Left: The clothing worn by Johannes in Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

with memorized codes and messages that needed to be relayed from one group to another. On and off, both sets of grandparents sheltered Jewish people in their homes. Everyone involved in these clandestine activities knew they could easily lose their lives because of their actions.

In June of 1944, my father thought he was going to a meeting of his underground group but, as soon as he stepped into the room, a hand was placed over his mouth. He and 22 other young men were taken first to a concentration camp in the Dutch town of Vught and several months later to the concentration camp Sachsenhausen near Berlin, where he became prisoner #100535.

In the year that followed, during which he and other inmates were subjected to unspeakable brutality and witnessed inhumane acts, the Russians liberated the camp on April 21, 1945. As the whole continent of Europe was in chaos, it would take my father a good six weeks to find his way back to his homeland.

In the meantime, during that last winter, things were getting more desperate by the week in the Netherlands, especially in the cities. There was no transportation, no electricity and, in particular, no food. By early 1945, people started to die of starvation. To this day people speak with great gratitude of the food dropped by the Allied forces (called Operation Manna) that took place in late April 1945. And there is even more gratitude and emotion when people talk about the Canadian troops who risked their lives, and in many cases paid the ultimate price, to liberate the Netherlands. My mother was one of the young women who rode the Canadian tanks into Amsterdam on that jubilant day, May 5, 1945.

Still, for my mother, Liberation Day was tinged with sadness, as she had no inkling of her fiancé's whereabouts, let alone knowledge of whether he was even still alive. When May turned into June, it was assumed my father was not coming back.

One morning, June 6, 1945, my maternal grandfather, a man of few words but with strong Christian convictions (he was a high school principal who served as church organist on Sundays) was splitting bits of scrounged wood as fuel. The doorbell rang and my grandfather pulled the rope that opened the door a few stories below. To his amazement, it was my father who came shuffling up the steep staircase, still in his striped concentration camp suit, weighing about 100 pounds on his six-foot-three frame. I remember my chatty grandmother telling the story of my father's return on many occasions. Apparently, when my Opa saw my father, he started banging his axe against the staircase railing and he shouted to his wife: "*Vrouw, vrouw, Johan is terug.*" Whenever my grandmother told this story, my Opa would nod.

As a child I realized that this story of my father's return was not just remembering a special occasion. For my grandparents, it was a profound statement of faith. One who was presumed dead was alive and although they never said this in so many words, I know that they clearly saw God's hand in this unexpected return.

It took some time for it to sink in that the suffering that had taken place in the German camps was off the scale of human imagination. Of the 23 young men in my father's illegal group, he was the only one to survive. In the early '90s, my father was added to the list of the "Righteous among the Nations," a distinction awarded by Yad Vashem in Israel to gentiles who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. The cost of discipleship on the part of my parents was high but my siblings and I give thanks to God for knowing that in the time of testing, our parents did the right thing.

So, as we remember the innocent victims of the Holocaust, let it be our hope and prayer that the world will never again witness such horror. ■

Anita Mack works as regional staff in Québec. She has been involved with the Christian Jewish Dialogue of Montréal for the past six years.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANITA MACK AND FAMILY

PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTO

Broken Yet Beloved

A VISION FOR THE CHURCH. PART TWO. **BY HARRIS ATHANASIADIS**

Let me start with a story. Early in my ministry at St. Mark's, Toronto, our Christian education committee developed an idea for helping children and their families rediscover the true meaning of Christmas. We decided to invite members of the congregation to a breakfast with lots of great food. As people were enjoying table fellowship we would invite them to listen again to the Christmas story and participate in conversation and crafts that would reinforce the Christmas message.

The breakfast was to start at 9:00 a.m. Some members of the committee came in early to decorate, set up and prepare the breakfast. Others were involved in organizing the program. I was part of the welcoming team. As it was the first time we were trying this, I was nervous, but also excited. Success would be amazing. Failure would be miserable.

Nine a.m. came and no one arrived. I started to worry a little even as I encouraged everyone to just give it more time. It was Saturday morning after all. Five past nine, and still no one! Now I could feel a little sweat beginning to drip down my back. It was 9:10 a.m., when I heard the familiar shuffling walk of Keith. Keith was a resident in our supportive housing complex attached to the church (until he died a few years ago). He had had a stroke when he was a child and this had left him with some mental and physical challenges. Even though Keith was much loved, he was not an easy person because he would ask the kinds of questions that made people uncomfortable. Keith was also someone who came and went, even in the middle of a service! People knew this and accepted it. "That's Keith," they would say.

One thing all of us also knew about Keith was that where there was food, we could rely on him to show. But since no one else had arrived, I'm sure I wasn't the only one extra excited to welcome him. I was so excited, in fact, (and relieved) that I not only welcomed him but took him by the arm to give him a tour of our wonderful breakfast buffet, even before he could decide what ➤

What if we shifted our approach to becoming smaller and more focused in our mission and ministry?

he wanted. As we walked past the different foods on the counter, the servers, also enthused because they had someone to serve, started pouring food onto his plate. He was then escorted to a table by a few of the greeters eager to get in on the action. I prepared coffee for him to his specifications and served it to him with a big smile.

Keith was taking in this attention in silence. I expect he was completely overwhelmed by the excitement and energy that met his arrival. He sat there and started to eat surrounded by a whole group of people asking him how he was enjoying everything. Royalty could not have been treated any better! Eventually more people came and all went well. Those first 20 minutes, however, gave me much to ponder.

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A PARABLE

Later that same week I happened to be preparing a Bible study on the gospels and the passage we were studying was the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:7-24). Reading the parable after the experience with Keith opened my eyes. The parable describes God's vision of community and fellowship against a worldly understanding where status, privilege, popularity, money and success become the measure of belonging. The first thing I noticed as I reread this parable is that God's vision is only discerned later on. The people first invited to the banquet and fellowship are all the important people in society, the popular people, those with the money, talent and attractiveness, those everyone would want at their party. But those people choose not to come. They've got better things to do and more important places to be. What humiliation for those issuing the invitation!

Now isn't this so much like our experience of church today? It wasn't long ago in our collective memories that everyone went to church on Sunday, and the more upstanding, popular and important people who were leaders in the wider community were also the elders and leaders of our churches. But this is no longer the case. Most of the important or successful people are gone.

At this point, however, the parable gets even more interesting. Does the master tell the servants to get more creative marketing the dinner, change up the menu, give people free Wi-Fi, great entertainment, and all kinds of programs and incentives to beat out the competition and get people to attend and give their time and money? Nothing of the sort! Instead, she or he tells the servants to forget about this group and to invite those who have nowhere to go, those who have nothing to do, those who are more desperate for a meal, for love and for community.

What's really unbelievable is that the servants are so desperate to fill the empty spots that they will not only take anybody and everybody, but they're told to compel, even beg them to come. What kind of crazy, pathetic vision is this that resorts to begging the beggars and pleading with the misfits and "losers" of the world to come to God's feast?

A VISION

Yet, isn't this the most awesome vision for the church? Imagine that instead of trying to create a church that will draw in all the important people, those who also have the money, gifts, leadership skills, those who are attractive, lovable, cool, and winners in the world, we instead shifted our focus totally on those the world has regularly discounted, persecuted, ignored and thought of as a burden or drag on our progress or success. Are these not the "least of these" (Matthew 25) in whom Christ is to be found? Is this not who the church is and what the church is called to be: a fellowship of saints broken yet beloved, being resurrected into something new as we are dying to something old?

Perhaps many will think this is just another way of nailing shut the coffin on our institutions. If our focus is on the have-nots or failures of the world, who will pay the bills? Who will manage our affairs? Who will provide leadership in our committees? By allowing the parable of the banquet to shape our vision—a parable consistent with Jesus's whole teaching on the kingdom fellowship of God—we are compelled to move in new directions.

What if we shifted our approach to becoming smaller and more focused in our mission and ministry? What if we

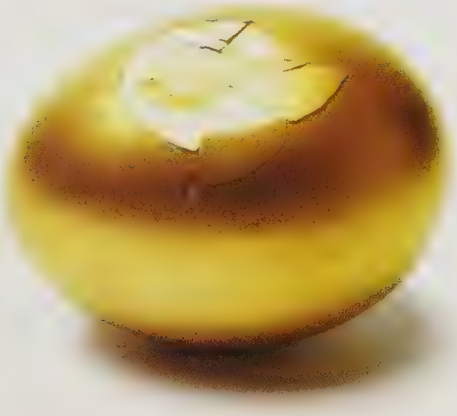
shifted our vision of church to a fellowship of communities less dependent on money? This means we would have to shift our dependence on two of the biggest budget items: buildings and salaries. How do we do this even if we wanted to?

We have to get creative. We have to start exploring a more intentional sharing of our buildings and people resources (ministers, musicians, pastoral care, Christian education, teaching, finance and administrative people), and perhaps we have to begin to equip key lay leaders with the tools to do more to make our communities less dependent on expensive buildings and multiple staff. We need to begin experimenting with fewer buildings and fewer professionals shared by multiple communities meeting in houses as much as larger centres. And we need to refocus our vision more intentionally on creating a fellowship where those the world discounts experience church as a place of welcome with open arms. If those of us who are broken or isolated discover friendship in such community as the basis of God's vision for all humanity and the earth, we may not get much money or many new members who are successful in the world, but we'll encounter Christ crucified and risen anew among us.

What would this vision of church as God's banquet fellowship mean for the equipping, educating, training, resourcing and financial supporting work that our national offices, theological colleges and presbyteries would focus on? What incentives could be given to particular clusters of congregations in particular regions to begin exploring ways of co-operating in order to become less dependent on buildings and salaries and more focused on equipping the people of God to reach out and create the fellowship where all people can belong, regardless of their money or talent? What we would look for in people, instead, is a genuine hunger for a word from the Lord, a need none of us have the luxury to ignore or pretend we can fulfill with our own talent, ingenuity or success.

A vision like this calls us to begin a nation-wide, region-specific community and neighbourhood-specific set of conversations, so that as we begin to shift our vision of church 180 degrees, we see all kinds of new possibilities for resurrection life in the face of the dying of our familiar and soon to be old ways of doing church. I don't know about any of you, but I would be excited about being part of such conversations at the local, regional and national levels of our church. God is calling us in our dying not to bury our heads in the sand and not to mimic the world's vision of corporate success. Rather God is calling us to begin talking, exploring and experimenting. God is calling us to embark on a new journey toward becoming the true church of the crucified/risen Christ! ■

Rev. Dr. Harris Athanasiadis is minister at St. Mark's, Toronto. The first part of this visioning series appeared in the April issue.



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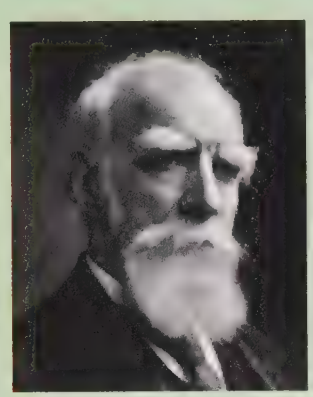

Lord Strathcona
(Donald Smith) 1820-1914

Moving to Canada when he was 17 to become a fur trader with the Hudson's Bay Company, this Scottish Presbyterian rose to become the company director. His dream to connect Canada via railroad became reality when he drove the last spike in 1885. His other contributions included:

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The Good News

THERE'S SO MUCH, WE TAKE IT FOR GRANTED. **BY KATHARINE STRANGE**

As for me, I said in my prosperity,
'I shall never be moved.'
—PSALM 30

Every day I am faced with a mountain of it. Every morning I awaken to the sounds of my baby laughing or talking to himself. I stumble out of my warm bed, in my apartment which is small but safe. I turn on the heat, which I never have to worry about paying for. I lift my sweet little guy out of his crib and we go get some breakfast. There is always food in the kitchen—so much that we have a hard time deciding what to eat. I turn on the tap and clean, safe drinking water fills up my kettle. My son is smashing some banana into his mouth and massaging the rest into his high-chair. He has never cried from prolonged hunger; I have never been one of those stunned mothers on the news brushing the flies away from his eyes. He has never been seriously ill and I don't have to worry that the food or water I'm giving him will make him so. After breakfast we lounge in our pyjamas playing. There is no office to rush to, no babysitter to explain things to, just us. Sometimes I am tired and sometimes he cries, but there isn't anything a nap couldn't fix.

All this I take for granted. I am not grateful each morning as my feet hunt for my slippers. I don't thank God for delivering me safely through the night. I don't think of those who haven't slept due to bullets and bangs and the fear that makes them wonder whether they will wake if they dare close their eyes. The trinity of the bed, the deadbolt, and the neighborhood watch bestow on me a peace which passes all understanding.

And I don't think about God. I read my son a Bible story before his nap but the words are so familiar that I find myself falling asleep. I know God is all around us, but I don't see Him. When we go on our walk my baby squeals with delight at the sight of a crow or the feeling of the wind. All I see are the grey clouds and wonder if it will rain. When it does, I curse the sky and my wet shoes.

I am a consumer of the finest degree. I scrupulously examine breakfast cereals for their sugar content and disdainfully place them back on the grocery store shelf. How dare the sky rain on me? I will write God a letter and ask for a refund of this day. A day I don't deserve but to which I somehow feel entitled. ■

Katharine Strange is one among a talented group of writers at Fairview, Vancouver.

PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTO

PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTO

A Work in Progress

COMING BACK TO CHURCH. **BY PATTI THOMAS**

Growing up in the 1950s my family went to a United church. Back in those days our social life revolved around the church and its activities. My grandfather was the church caretaker and all my immediate family and extended family attended. Even though I was about four, I have a few very strong memories about being in church. The smell of the wood, Sunday school, singing the doxology and Mr. Ross who used to give me peppermints.

I stopped going to church when I started high school, for the obvious teenage reasons: don't want to, you can't make me go, too much homework, none of my friends go, it's not cool, etc. I didn't feel it did anything for me at all. Sometimes I'd go at Christmas or at Easter, but it was mainly to make my parents happy, not for my own benefit.

Then a couple of years ago, two events started to gradually put my life into a new perspective.

The first was when my father-in-law died on Easter Sunday. He was very involved in his church and as a younger and middle-aged man he did missionary work in South America. He was an amazing man who made an incredible impact not only on my life, but also on those around him. He not only talked the ➤

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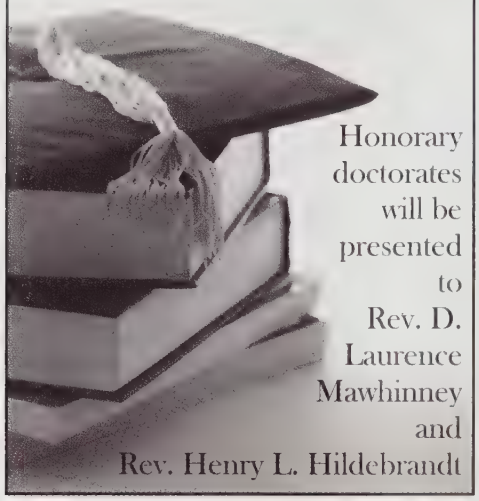

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The people I knew who went to church and had faith had something extra in their lives. Their marriages seemed more solid, their lives seemed more fulfilled, more whole

talk, he walked the walk of being a good Christian. I felt that his death on this very special day was definitely not a coincidence. There was someone else's hand involved in taking him on Easter Sunday. This thought has stayed with me and I think about it often.

Then my path crossed with someone who told me about a movie which had impacted him dramatically. It's called *Fireproof* starring the Christian actor, Kirk Cameron. It tells the story of a troubled marriage that is saved when the couple discovers a book called *The Love Dare*. The book contains the basic principles of how to treat each other, how to respect each other and more importantly about unconditional love. It's about their journey to faith and how they accepted Jesus as their Saviour, and how his unconditional love and forgiveness saved their marriage. The principles laid out in this book were so basic and so simple, it was right in front of me the whole time ... how could I possibly have not seen it before?

I now believe there are no coincidences. God already has your road map planned out. He closes doors, opens windows, and puts the right people in your path at the right time in order to guide you.

The people I knew who went to church and had faith had something extra in their lives. Their marriages seemed more solid, their lives seemed more fulfilled, more whole. I saw family members and close friends going through difficult times draw on the strength of their faith. It was like someone always had their back; they always had someone to lean on.

I started to think that maybe I needed that extra something in my life. I thought maybe I should try going back to church. I didn't tell my dad I was coming and wasn't even sure he would be there the first Sunday I came in. He was ... and I will never forget the look on his face. It went from incredible disbelief to being absolutely lit up with joy. Being at church with my dad is probably one of the best things I've done.

I can't say that it is an easy path to follow. Then there are those days when I drive to work along Lakeshore Road and I see the sun rise over the lake, or ducks in flight, or the way the sun is reflecting through the clouds, and I take the few minutes to pull my car over and enjoy it and give thanks.

I took an introduction to Christianity course and one of the participants said something which struck me: "Being a Christian is more than just being a good person, you have to read and speak the word." I always thought I wasn't doing too badly as a good person, or I try hard to be one. But then I realized I needed to do more, so I went out and bought my first Bible and started to read.

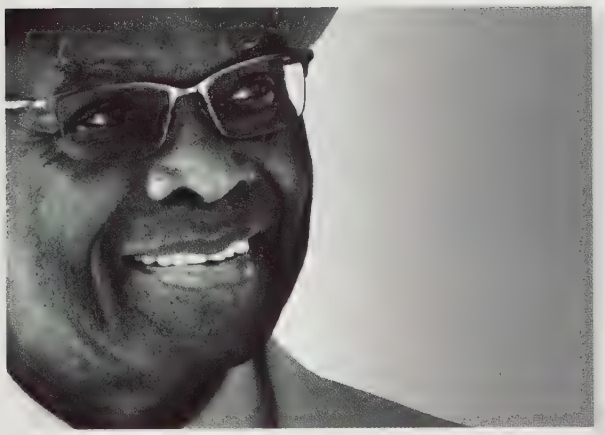
I'm a work in progress. I'm still trying to find my way. It's easy to talk the talk, but not walk the walk. So I try to be diligent about reading the scriptures, I try to always be mindful of my words and actions and putting others first. Some days I'm good at it and some maybe not quite so good. But I think as long as I keep putting one foot in front of the other I will eventually get there, especially surrounded by people like you. ■

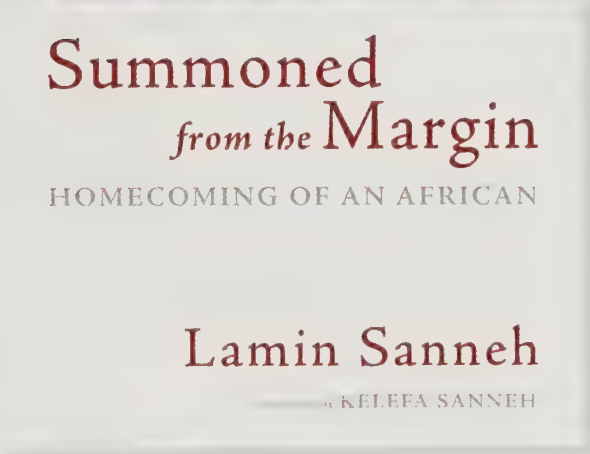
Patti Thomas goes to Briarwood, Beaconsfield, Que. This is excerpted from a testimonial she gave at the church.

From Islam to Jesus

A LONELY CHRISTIAN TELLS HIS LIFE STORY.

BY ROLAND DE VRIES





Summoned from the Margin: Homecoming of an African
by Lamin Sanneh
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company

The name Lamin Sanneh is hardly a household one for most Canadian Presbyterians, but he is someone worth getting to know. His autobiography is a compelling read, simply in terms of the unlikely and remarkable trajectory of his life.

Sanneh was born in a small village in the Gambia (into the Islamicized Mandinka people of West Africa), eventually converted to Christianity and later went on to become professor of world Christianity at Yale University.

Even more, it is worth getting to know Sanneh because his narrative and scholarship represent a significant resource for the western church as it confronts two overlapping realities: namely, the crisis of confidence in its own ranks and the dramatic rise of Christianity across Africa.

For Sanneh, encounter with the risen Jesus, whom he first met through the Islamic traditions of his childhood and youth, lies at the centre of the story. He writes of his discovery of Jesus as one who lived a compellingly human life, and of his discovery that this Jesus is the embodiment of God's forgiveness. In sharing his story, Sanneh writes beautifully of the moment of his turning to Jesus: "Like a gentle nod, a wave of anticipation rose in me as I responded feebly to a long delayed invitation, like rejoining a journey begun before my mother conceived me."

The person of Jesus and the forgiveness he embodies are central both to Sanneh's story and to the story of Christian renewal that is unfolding across Africa today, where it is expected there will be more than 600 million Christians by 2025. Although the Christianity that is coming to fresh expression across the continent is neither uniform nor uniformly positive (Sanneh would ask whether Christianity in the West has ever been so!), this Christianity is nevertheless rooted in a very real re/discovery of God and is unabashed in its faith in Jesus.

At the same time, Sanneh's deep convictions about the reality of God's love and of forgiveness in Christ do not translate into an attitude of superiority or into a refusal to engage openly with those of other traditions. His convictions are held firmly, but also lightly, so that he remains open to expressions of global Christianity and to dialogue and encounter with Islam (both personally and academically). Sanneh will argue, in fact, that our engagement with world Christianity and with Islam can only be meaningful if we western Christians know where we ourselves stand. Also, that such engagement will invariably require of us that we decide where we stand on foundational questions of faith. ➤

BUILDING HOPE

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Sanneh's openness to conversation with others is rooted both in his faith and in his particular experiences as a person. His openness to dialogue with Muslims, for example, cannot be separated out from his first discovery of Jesus within Islam itself. I am enough a student of Kierkegaard to know that there are some things we humans cannot give directly to one another, the kind of openness exhibited by Sanneh being a prime example. We must learn or discover this openness for ourselves, if at all. Yet having read Sanneh's autobiography, and having had the opportunity to speak with him by telephone at his Connecticut home, I have come away with the sense that this is someone who can apprentice us in the ways of a generous and gracious orthodoxy.

We in the western church stand at a stark crossroads. In our cultural context, orthodox expressions of faith are marginalized and maligned and our confidence in faith wanes. And we look across to sisters and brothers within global Christianity who are uninhibited in expressing their faith in Christ and in pointing out the implications of this faith for the wider society. Living our faith in such a context can often be a lonely experience, notwithstanding the friendship and community that the body of Christ affords.

On this question of loneliness, Sanneh again proves a helpful guide. This is so not only because he invites us into conversation and community with those who live faith more confidently in the worldwide context, but also because he has lived through the experience of loneliness in faith. Following his conversion to Christ as a teenager, Sanneh approached the local Protestant and Roman Catholic churches in Banjul, the Gambia, seeking baptism, only to be rebuffed for more than a year. When he later moved to America, he found local Protestant congregations to be less than fully hospitable toward him.

Even more, as a scholar Sanneh has staked out positions that have made his a lonely voice in the academy, arguing, for example, that the work of Christian missionaries sometimes led to a renewal of indigenous cultures (particularly through their linguistic work and their translation of the Christian scriptures). That is, he argues, that missionaries were sometimes more than mere handmaids of colonialism. Further, he has argued that the contemporary renewal of Christianity across the continent is indigenous to Africa and its own people, rather than being simply a vestige of colonial exploitation.

Through this personal and professional "loneliness" Sanneh has exhibited faithful patience, holding fast to Christ and his purposes in the face of broken Christian community and in the face of ideological resistance to the gospel as a constructive force relative to culture. I suspect that Lamin Sanneh would say that his patience and trust in Christ have been rewarded, finding himself at home as he now does within the Roman Catholic Church. And we can only hope that his academic colleagues might one day become open to Sanneh's counter-intuitive arguments concerning the constructive contributions of Christian faith and mission in relation to indigenous African culture.

In our particular context it is refreshing to discover among the saints one who speaks so clearly and helpfully and hospitably. Sanneh's hospitality was on display as we ended our recent telephone conversation with traditional Mandinka greetings that I had learned from my wife (who spent a year and a half working as a nurse in the Gambia). Faithful to his West African heritage, Sanneh also asked me to pass on his greetings to Becky, which I was only too happy to do. ■

Rev. Dr. Roland De Vries is minister at Kensington, Montreal. You can read his blog at presbyterianrecord.ca

Intentional Community

A SPARK TO SPREAD RENEWAL ACROSS THE CHURCH.

BY FRED STEWART

As I write this, the March issue of the *Record* has been available for only a couple of weeks. In that time I have had more feedback than I have received for all the things I have ever written for public consumption combined. I hit on something significant: many ministers in our denomination are burning out.

This is a problem worthy of our attention. What is needed is focus and strategy. After consultation with our national board over the past year and a presentation to our annual general meeting at the beginning of March this year, I believe the Renewal Fellowship has both.

While renewal, in all of its facets, can be an overwhelming agenda, focusing on ministers is strategic. Their capacity and potential for renewal impacts congregations directly. Their spiritual health directly influences the spiritual health of their people. Their ability to model discipleship in their own lives gives leadership to their peers and their people.

Our strategy can be simply stated but will need much more than we alone can bring to the table. It needs the help of every part of our church. We need the help of our courts, our national offices, our laity, our theological schools and our ministers themselves. That is still not enough. Our strategy needs the prayers of all of us.

Our goal is to radically increase the number of our ministers who meet regularly with their peers in some form of intimate spiritual community. As a result, spiritual connection can replace isolation, spiritual growth can replace dryness, encouragement can replace despair, friendship can replace loneliness and participation in authentic, intimate and vulnerable community can replace guarded, defensive lives.

I believe renewal in ministers' lives would be the model for congregations to experience this same kind of community. I believe this can be the spark that begins to spread renewal throughout our entire church.

So what is this strategy that can be simply stated but is so challenging to implement?

Encourage ministers to form a group if none currently exists. This could include anywhere from two to a dozen people. It could meet once or twice a month. It could be initiated by a simple invitation to gather for coffee. Our experience tells us that a personal invitation is the key.

In its first stage, the group may focus on sharing each other's ministry journeys and praying for each other: their challenges, their congregations and their families. In later stages these communities will seek greater vulnerability, transparency and accountability in their spiritual, parental and congregational lives.

That's where our work begins. Pray for us. Offer us whatever help you can. Open up existing groups to invite and welcome those not yet included.

We will work with any who wish to create or grow a group of ministers who meet as an intentional spiritual community. ■

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship. Contact him at fred@pastorfred.ca; renewal-fellowship.ca.

PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTO

BEST PRACTICES

FACING THE FUTURE WITH JOY AND CONFIDENCE.

BY JOHN-PETER SMIT
ILLUSTRATION BY MICHELLE THOMPSON

Over the past six years, as the congregational development consultant for my synod, I have been in literally hundreds of churches. Many—maybe even most—of these congregations are in gradual decline and are searching for solutions to reverse direction and increase vitality and growth. Sadly, almost all are going about it in exactly the wrong way. While there is no simple answer to how to turn churches around, there are some markers that point us in the right direction; there are practices that can lead to a renewed sense of mission and purpose for Presbyterian churches. ➤

Before we get there it is foundational that we understand three things:

- The world has changed and, for the most part, we have not.
- We are called to adaptive change, not technical change.
- This cannot ever be about more bodies in the pews or dollars in the plate.

First, the world has changed. Most of us grew up in a world where church was seen as an integral part of Canadian life. We went to church, our friends and family went to church, prayer was heard in schools and good citizens of Canada and good Christians were more or less perceived as the same thing. This is no longer true. For many good reasons, faith is no longer a part of civic life and it can be safely said that the values of the world and the values of the church are no longer in harmony.

Church attendance has gone from 70 per cent of the population in the late 1950s to less than 15 per cent today. There are many reasons for this, most of which are not our fault although we did get complacent and expect, for instance, our schools to teach things (like prayer) that we should have been teaching ourselves. It is important to understand that this decline has happened across the board and is not unique to the Presbyterian Church. In other words, the world changed and we did not.

The lesson here is that as long as we continue to believe that staying the course or trying harder are solutions, we will get nowhere. The author Peter Steinke describes a consultation in which a woman jumps to her feet and proclaims, "If next year is 1965, we will be ready!" If we continue to try to build a church for a world that no longer exists, we deserve to die.

Second, technical change is change that can be most easily described as a solution to a problem. Our hymn books wear out so we replace them with a screen and a projector. That is technical change. It doesn't change us.

Adaptive change is change that changes us. It is an ongoing process of change which forms us into a different body than we were before. Perhaps the easiest way to think of this is to consider many of my abortive attempts to lose weight. All of these efforts come down to the expectation that if I just dieted for a while, I could go back to eating like I did before. It never worked. The only way to lose weight is a lifestyle change. Often I hear people say if only we had ... more youth ... more money ... more young families, etc., our problem would be solved. In reality we are not called to solve a problem, we are called to adapt to a whole new lifestyle—a type of change that never ends.

Finally, this can never be about increasing revenue

OUR HYMN BOOKS WEAR OUT SO WE REPLACE THEM WITH A SCREEN AND A PROJECTOR. THAT IS TECHNICAL CHANGE IT DOESN'T CHANGE US. ADAPTIVE CHANGE IS CHANGE THAT CHANGES US

or attendance. I once heard a woman say (without guile) that "we need to find where the rich people live in town and invite them to church." Her reasoning was impeccable; let's kill two birds with one stone. Sadly, this attitude will always backfire. Essentially what we are saying is "come to my church and do the jobs I am tired of doing and pay the bills I am tired of paying." When we view people thusly, they become prospects; we are fostering the attitude that says newcomers are there to do something for us, rather than us serving them. In a very real sense we become vampires seeking fresh blood rather than Christians sharing the good news of the gospel.

It is hard not to adopt simplistic solutions to a much more complex issue but I hope you can appreciate how self-defeating they actually are.

That said, there are things we can do. I would like to break these down into three categories as well: purpose, passion and practice.

PURPOSE

In my experience, churches which are thriving are very clear about their purpose and their purpose is to share the good news of Jesus Christ. In fact, it is safe to say that they love Jesus more than they love the Presbyterian Church and more than they love their own congregations.

There are two aspects to this. The first can be summed up in the motto of a program called GenOn Ministries (a ministry for children and youth): "Nothing is more important than a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ." In many ways and for many reasons, while we firmly believe in the Trinity, in our practice we tend to speak and relate primarily to God. Our prayer language is typically addressed to God, our sermons often about God and while this is not unimportant, we have neglected the invitation to a relationship with our Saviour, Jesus.

The implications of this are profound and perhaps best described by the TV preacher Joel Osteen who said: "You can be committed to church but not to Christ, but you cannot be committed to Christ and not to church." Too often we love our churches or our Presbyterian identity and fail to see that sharing the love of Christ must not only come first but, in fact, makes the other loves possible. We can never lose sight of the simple fact that Christ's kingdom is the most important thing and our denomination and our congregations are simply means of incarnating and sharing that love.

Or to put it even more bluntly, if all we are concerned about is congregational or denominational survival, not only do we have little to offer anyone who comes through our doors, but we are almost certainly doomed to fail, having built up treasures on earth rather than in heaven (Matthew 6:19-20).

PASSION

The second thing that healthy churches have is passion. One of the realities of the world in which we live is that we are almost chronically exhausted. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in our churches.

Often I will attend worship that can only be described as going through the motions. There is no passion, there is no laughter and there is no joy. In scripture we are reminded that "the joy of the Lord is our strength," (Nehemiah 8:10) and further that Jesus came in order that we might "have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Most of the time we feel neither joyful nor abundant in our churches, yet not to feel this is an indicator that something is amiss.

By contrast, when I go to healthy churches the energy is palpable. People are happy and excited to be there; there is energy and excitement and the expectation God is actually going to show up. It is tangible. Please note that this is not a function of size. I have been in small churches and I have been in big churches with and without this presence.

Passion is a cyclical process. Passion produces ministry which in turn produce passion. It can be difficult to start but once it does, it takes on a ➤

IT IS STUNNING TO ME HOW MANY CHURCHES ARE GENUINELY UNFRIENDLY, ESPECIALLY AT COFFEE HOUR, WHERE NEWCOMERS ARE ROUTINELY IGNORED AS PEOPLE VISIT THEIR FRIENDS

life of its own. As mentioned, passion produces joy and laughter and abundance, and abundance and joy and laughter produce passion.

One of the other things passion fosters is quality. Too often I am in churches where mediocrity is the order of the day, yet we serve a Saviour who gave his very best and expects the same in return. So, do you have high quality worship, whatever the style? (Or is it "just good enough?") Is the church scrupulously clean? Does it smell clean? When you interact with others are you giving your full attention or are you thinking about something else? Do you expect to encounter God, Jesus and the Spirit in worship? If we don't expect to be moved in our encounters in worship or with each other, we ought not be surprised when it doesn't happen.

I want to qualify a little bit what I have just said. High quality worship does not necessarily mean it has to be slick or professional. Most churches lack those resources and others can become more concerned with performance than worship. Passion is not about technical excellence; it is about giving our very best to whatever we do and understanding at the very core of our being that this is how we are supposed to live.

While I am now moving toward the third category, practices, another way of thinking about this is acknowledging that we are often too busy doing church to be church. Recently I was at a church that had 18 committees for a worshipping congregation of about 70. This is crazy. It was no wonder that passion is hard to find in a context like that. Yes, it is important to do the work of the church, but our calling as Christians is to be passionate followers of Jesus and not dutiful attenders of meetings. In fact, we must remember (and remind each other) that the work of a Christian is prayer, living into God's word and sharing the good news of Jesus; it is not perpetuating an institution.

Finally, passion is attractive and it is contagious. People do not want to come aboard a sinking ship. They want to experience life and joy and hope—all the things the gospel promises, all things Christians are called to experience and share.

PRACTICES

The final aspect of healthy and growing churches is that they pay attention to their practices. In this respect, it is important to note that there is no silver bullet and there is no one big thing that will solve our challenges. In fact, it is the exact opposite—it is many small things done consistently and well that make all the difference. A colleague calls it relentless incrementalism. I like that term because it reminds me that it can't end. We are called to a lifestyle change if we want to move to health and effectiveness.

It is also important to note how important our practices are. When I graduated almost 30 years ago, there were about seven things that you could do to be effective in ministry and if you got four or so right, you were okay. Now we need all of them. We no longer have the luxury of taking things for granted.

In terms of our practices, it is easiest to divide them into practices inside the church and outside the church. Inside the church there are many individual practices that we could identify which could help us. It is not my task in this article to catalogue them. Instead, let me identify a couple of broad areas of concern.

Healthy churches practice hospitality. Hospitality is more than a warm welcome before church and coffee after, though it is stunning to me how many churches are genuinely unfriendly, especially at coffee hour, where newcomers are routinely ignored as people visit their friends. Hospitality includes a warm welcome and fellowship. It includes a church that is accessible; not just for those with mobility issues, but in a user-friendly bulletin with a lack of jargon and in-jokes. Accessible churches have signs and provide a way for people to safely and easily enter into the life and ministry of the

SPIRITUAL MATURITY, LIKE PARENTING, DEMANDS THAT WE SEEK THE BEST FOR OUR COMMUNITIES OF FAITH IN BEHAVIOUR AND PRACTICE

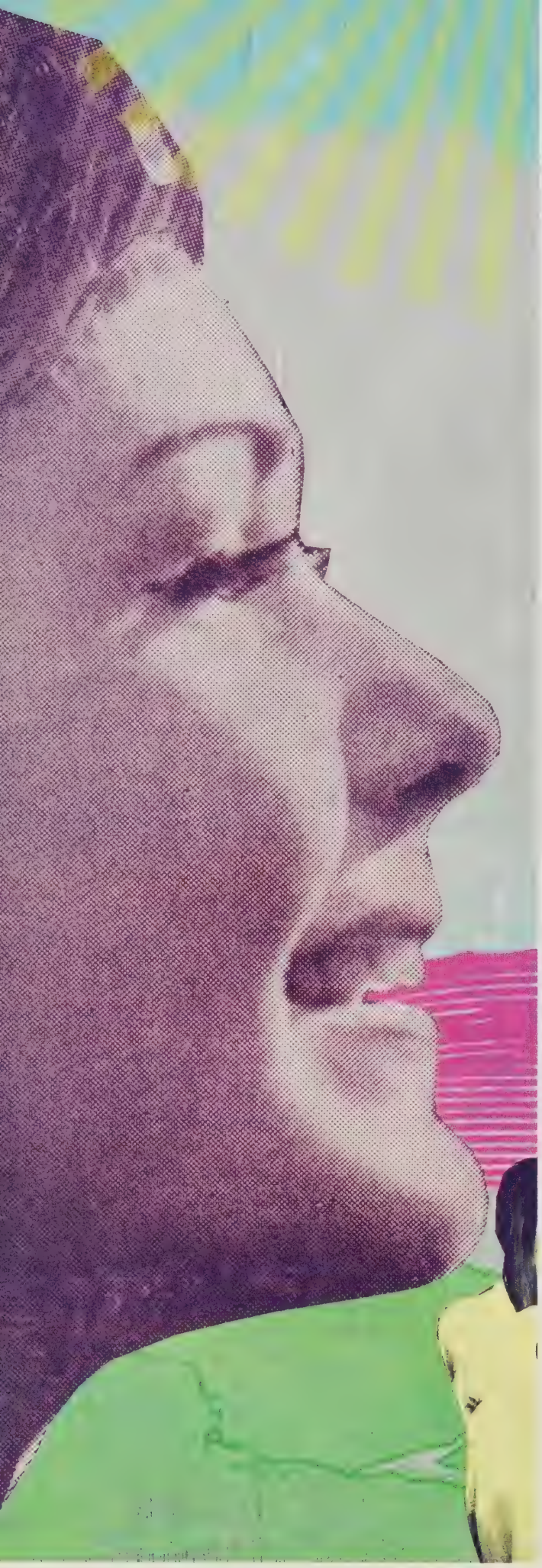
congregation. Hospitality includes offering prayer and faith as well as cookies and tea.

Healthy churches have mature, faithful leaders and understand that their calling is to invite others to become mature followers of Jesus Christ.

The consequence of this practice is twofold. First, it fosters an emotionally and spiritually healthy church. Too often in our churches, belonging is the highest value. If this is this case, we can often put up with terrible behaviour or immature responses because it is more important that everyone belong than that we be held to a high Christian standard. Spiritual maturity, like parenting, demands that we seek the best for our communities of faith in behaviour and practice.

The second outcome of spiritually mature leadership is God Talk. So many of us have been raised in an environment where "faith is felt not telt" and it is killing us. Our inability to comfortably share what God is doing in our lives is crippling our churches because not only is it denying us the opportunity to remember why we have been called to be in community in the first place, but it means we have no practice in sharing our faith outside the church. When this happens we have lost touch with our purpose in a most profound way.

A few years ago I read an annual report from a congregation. In it, it said, "we are so small that we cannot meet our own needs, much less the needs of the community." While I understood their sentiment, I also realized that with this statement they had stopped being a church and had become a club for Presbyterians. Healthy churches impact their communities. Too many churches gear all their ➤



activities only for those already in the church. Without exception it is churches that are reaching out that are thriving. There are many things congregations can do; some have prison ministries or after school programs or work with unwed mothers—the possibilities are limitless but all match the needs of the community.

Again, it is not my task to catalogue the opportunities; instead let me identify their common characteristics.

First, they are not a bargain. For most of our history, ministry has been a bargain. "We'll run Vacation Bible School for you and you send your kids to church." This does not work. Ministry must come because Jesus loves others and because Jesus loves others, we do too. To expect that people will come to our church because we do things for them serves us, not them. This also speaks to work which is primarily designed to serve the church and not the community. Things like fundraisers might be important but we have to be very careful about calling them ministry; sometimes they are, often they are not.

Secondly, ministry must be done by the congregation itself. There are times when raising money for a cause or a need is important. However, we can no longer pay people to do what we are unwilling to do ourselves. So, for instance, it may be important to support a mission in India financially, but it is probably even more important to roll up our sleeves and get to work in our local context. Jesus calls us to be salt and light and never has that been more important than now. In this there are two final considerations: we cannot be arrogant in our service, assuming those around us to be the objects of our charity. Rather, we must be fellow labourers sharing Christ's love and we must be prepared to go out into our communities rather than assuming our communities will come to us.

Even with these three things—purpose, passion and good practices—there is no guarantee that our churches will grow. As we remember this, it is important to remember that all the churches the apostle Paul wrote to—Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi—all those churches are closed now. I have tried very hard to not say that any of these will make your church grow; maybe they will, maybe they won't. What they will do is help us be the church that Christ is calling us to be and that is attractive. And, more importantly, it will remind us that "whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8)—knowledge which will allow us to face the future with joy and confidence and hope. ■

Rev. Dr. John-Peter Smit is the congregational development consultant for the Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda. He is married to Tori, a diaconal minister and the education consultant for the synod. They have two grown children, Jacob and Miriam. John-Peter worships at Morningside High Park, Toronto. When not working, he is busy renovating his house and restoring old cars.

Death Becomes Us All

THANKS BE TO GOD. **BY JOHN VISSERS**

In recent months I have attended more than a few funerals and sent numerous notes of condolence. It is always a tender moment and a holy privilege. We've lost longtime ministers, elders and members of congregations. Some have lived long lives; others were taken too soon; all are deeply missed. Colleagues have lost parents, spouses, and children. We've all lost friends.

I've quoted the American singer-songwriter John Mellencamp in the pages of the *Record* before: "Life is short. Even in its longest days." Contrary to what the movies and the media tell us, death does not take a holiday.

Death stirs up many emotions. Whenever I prepare to preach at a funeral, or attend a memorial service, I often find my thoughts moving in different directions, swirling really.

First, I feel grief. Sometimes it is my own deep pain for the loss of someone I knew, loved and respected. Sometimes it is the pain I feel for the family and friends of those left behind. In all cases, I feel sorrow for the loss.

Second, I feel gratitude. In prayer and reflection, I find myself thanking God for the person whose life we are celebrating. Every life is a gift from God. No one should die alone. All should know that they are beloved children of God.

Lately I've been especially grateful for a generation of men and women who have been the heart and soul of the Presbyterian Church in Canada for the past 60 or 70 years. I've stood at hospital bedsides and been to funerals of people who have given and prayed and worked sacrificially for decades. Now in their 80s and 90s, these folks have served the Lord in their time. To that generation, the living and the dead, I say, "thank you." You are to be celebrated. We have a goodly heritage (Psalm 16:6).

> Grace is unmerited favour. It is a sense of being loved and accepted apart from anything I have done or not done. It is coming to realize that life is a gift. I did not have to be here; but I am

Thirdly, I feel grace. Grace is unmerited favour. It is a sense of being loved and accepted apart from anything I have done or not done. It is coming to realize that life is a gift. I did not have to be here; but I am.

Grace enables me to embrace the gift of life, even though it often seems so short and fragile and random. Grace empowers me to use that gift for the glory of God. Grace fills me with faith in the risen and ascended Christ, and with hope in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

Yes, death becomes us all. But thanks be to God, because not even death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

P.S. I am writing this column on Wednesday, March 13, the day Pope Francis was elected. Let us pray for him and for our sisters and brothers in the Roman Catholic Church, that they may be given grace to bear witness to Christ, and that we all may be one.

Yours in faith, hope and love,
John Vissers ■

Rev. Dr. John Vissers is director of academic programs and professor of historical theology at Knox College, Toronto.

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People & Places

To make People & Places submissions, email: **peopleplaces@presbyterianrecord.ca**

First, Trail, B.C.
Before taking a turn on their new slide, Sunday school students wait for Rev. Meridyth Robertson to cut the ribbon at the grand opening of the church's play area.

St. Andrew's, Belleville, Ont.
In March, the congregation held a reception to celebrate the ordination of two new elders, Kevin Hay and Larry Amyot. Pictured here are the two elders with Rev. Anne-Marie Jones.

St. Andrew's, Guelph, Ont.
More than 150 people joined Rev. John Borthwick and his family at a luncheon in January to celebrate his 10 years of service to the congregation. Fond memories of their pastor were shared, honouring his leadership and dedication to both the church and wider community. He was also given a monetary gift, 10 extra days of paid holidays—one for every year of service—and a memory book filled with notes of best wishes and thanks. John is pictured here with his wife, Kate, and their children, Logan and Shannon.

National Offices, Toronto
Katherine Allen (centre), the WMS's longest serving employee, retired last fall. Here she is at her retirement party along with Joan Smith, WMS president, and Sarah Kim, executive director. "My award is to have all of you present," Allen said to a room so full, guests were peeking in from the hallway.

Knox, Alliston, Ont.
Hannah Hill plays flute at an old style service, where members arrived in their best period dress. The special event was just one of many held last year in celebration of the church's 150th anniversary. Each month, a different event honoured the congregation's shared history.

Melville, Scarborough, Ont.
Presenting the JOY Team (Jesus first, Others second, Yourself last): Bruce and Anne Compton, Jennifer Eisler and Loren Meszaros. These four members participated in a PAN Mission trip to Nicaragua in February. They served primarily through sports, assisting with games for children and youth each morning. They also delivered gifts to inmates in a women's prison, cancer patients in a children's hospital and girls in an orphanage.

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Kapuskasing, St. John's Presbyterian and Kapuskasing United; Full-time minister for the new Ecumenical Shared Ministry; Interim Moderator Rev. Arlene Onuoha, 113 Preston St., Timmins, ON P4N 3N1; 705-264-1051; arleneonuoha@hotmail.com and Pastoral Charge Supervisor Rev. Dale Young, 226-A Dixon St., Porcupine, ON P0N 1C0; 705-235-0855; northerndaisy942.dy@gmail.com.

Kingston, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Karen Bach; 613-929-3693; karen.bach@utoronto.ca.

Kitchener, Calvin; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. J. Mark Lewis, 54 Queen St. N., Kitchener, ON N2H 2H2; 519-578-4430; revmarklewis@gmail.com.

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Scarborough, Fallingbrook, Interim Moderator Rev. Wayne Kleinsteuber, 60 Overload Cres., Toronto, ON M1B 4P3; revandthemrs@sympatico.ca.

Whitby, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Alexander Wilson, 17 Colonial Ave., Scarborough, ON M2M 2C3; 416-431-0841 (church) or 647-501-0632 (cell); st.stephens.scarborough@gmail.com.

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Brantford, Alexandra; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Chris Little, 64 Blandford St., PO Box 99, Innerkip, ON N0J 1M0; 519-469-3904; clittle@execulink.com.

Burlington, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Robert Docherty, c/o Knox Presbyterian Church, 461 Elizabeth St., Burlington, ON L7R 4B1; 905-333-3013; ➤

revbob.docherty@gmail.com.
Dundas, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Tom Billard, 1901 8th Concession W., RR 1, Cambridge, ON N1R 5S2; 519-621-3023; tcbillard@rogers.com.
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Obituaries

McGregor, Stewart, (1923-2012) served as an elder at Renfrew Presbyterian Church from 1950 until his death in November. Stewart, a carpenter/builder by trade, was recognized at his funeral as a builder in all aspects of his life, in his family, in the church and in the community. As someone who lived his faith, he was respected for his thoughtful opinions at session meetings, for the many visits he made and his support for church activities. He had formerly served on the board of managers and as a trustee. Stewart never sought recognition for himself but was keenly interested in the achievements of others, especially those he watched grow up over the years.

He is fondly remembered by his wife of 65 years, Cassie, his daughter Cathy Storie, son-in-law David, his four grandchildren, four great-grandchilden, extended McGregor families and the congregation of Renfrew Presbyterian Church. Stewart was predeceased by one son, David.

McLelland, Audrey Mary Brunton, born in Hamilton, Ont., May 3, 1925, passed away peacefully on March 5, 2013. For 65 years the beloved wife of Rev. Dr. Joseph C. McLelland who survives her, along with their children Jonathan (Maria), Peter (Lauryn), Andrew (May), and Margaret, and grandchildren Julia (Nigel), Sean, Gian-Luca, Simon, Kaleigh, Patrizio and Timothy.

Audrey was active in various church activities from St. David's, Hamilton, through Val d'Or and Perron Gold Mine, Newington-St. Leonard's Edinburgh, Bolton and Nashville, Ont., to St. Columba-by-the-Lake and Briarwood in Quebec. She was a member of PYPS, choirs, WMS (life member), and was a church school teacher, explorer and CGIT leader, and ordained an elder at St. Columba. She was known for her hospitality to students and friends. Her compassionate nature led her to volunteer for 10 years with the Lakeshore School Board caring for special students and for 30 years with the Lakeshore General Hospital serving on the cardiac ward.

Two activities engaged her talents: the care of children and of dogs. Besides her own children and grandchildren, she nurtured many others including two orphans in Edinburgh. Along the way she adopted and trained six Labrador Retrievers. She enjoyed travel, accompanying Joe to conferences and research trips including the U.K., Germany, Italy, Greece and Taiwan. Audrey endured health problems, notably cancer in 1985, recurring in 2012. Her last year was a struggle but her final six weeks at the West Island Palliative Care Residence proved a comfortable stay with family and friends visiting and Joe staying with her. ■

Theological Conversation

JOHN CALVIN IN GENEVA. **BY CONNIE WARDLE**

From July 6 to 22, 2012, Connie Wardle participated in a pilgrimage through countries touched by the Protestant Reformation—France, Switzerland and Scotland. This is the fifth of a series of reflections on the journey.

St. Pierre Cathedral, Geneva

The city of Geneva has not forgotten John Calvin. His name appears on street signs, plaques and bottles of beer (along with the slogan "*in birae predestines.*") In the cathedral, signs let tourists know in which chair he sat and in which pulpit he preached. His stone countenance looks out from the famous Reformation Wall. And at the Reformation Museum, a sign with a smiling, cartoon Calvin points the way to the entrance.

Yet Calvin's time in Geneva was conflicted. When in 1538 he left the city behind, he kicked the dust off his feet and planned never to return. He was forced out by the city council and his appeals to stay went nowhere. I suspect he secretly heaved a sigh of relief. Here it was at last: a way out of the seemingly endless political and ecclesiastical squabbles and strife. Yet he did not have to feel like abandoning the city was abandoning the call of God.

When the city council recognized its loss and asked him to return in 1540, he greeted the news with a mix of amusement and horror. In a letter to his friend Pierre Viret, Calvin said he would rather die on a cross than return to "that place of torture." Yet by 1541, he had agreed to go back to Geneva. It turned out to be a permanent move. He died there in 1564 and was buried in an unmarked tomb.

Calvin became a focal point in the theological debates that raged throughout his life. In addition to the schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the churches pioneered by various reformers, there were arguments between the reformers themselves. Theologians like Calvin waged battles of ideas on multiple fronts.

Today, Geneva is associated with diplomacy, international relationships and ecumenism. We visited the ecumenical centre where the World Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches and a plethora of other organizations have their offices.

Isn't it interesting, I thought, for a city to shift from a centre of theological controversy 500 years ago to a centre of theological bridge-building today.

The statement "that all may be one" featured prominently as a sort of mantra for modern ecumenism (and it was incorporated into a mural in the centre's conference room). Differing beliefs caused churches and traditions to split apart. Can the beliefs they hold in common begin to bring them together?

I found myself returning again and again to the idea behind an exhibit in the Reformation Museum. The space was set up as a dining room. Each place setting featured a prominent reformer and each chair was a display case containing one of his works. The historical figures and their debates were portrayed as a conversation around a dinner table. It was a wonderful image.

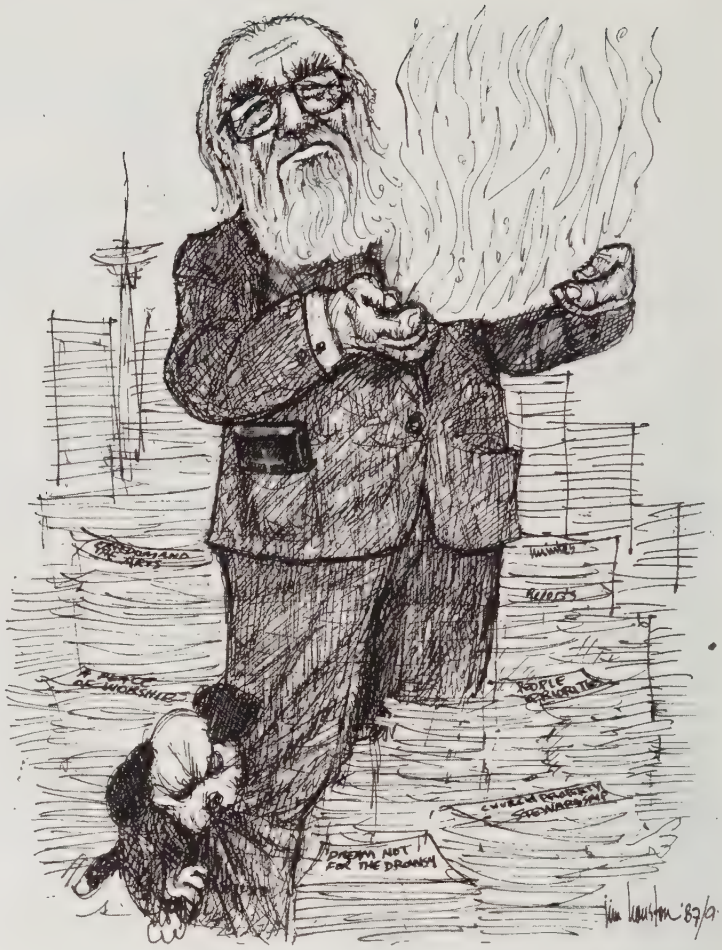
Before we left the ecumenical centre, we celebrated communion in the chapel. It's a space of glass and wood which incorporates elements essential to many different traditions: a crucifix, an empty cross, icons of Mary and the Christ Child, a Bible, candles, an ornate fence and simple archway before the altar. There are no compromises, our host said. It's meant to be a space of worship for anyone.

"That all may be one." It's nice to think about a dining table big enough for all of us. ■

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s staff writer.*

Poet, Pastor, Activist

CHURCH MOURNS THE DEATH OF REV. STUART COLES. BY SETH VEENSTRA



Rev. Stuart Coles, pioneer-activist, poet and pastor, passed away March 23.

The guiding force behind the church's Confession of Faith Concerning Church and Nation (1955) and one of the founders of FoodShare Toronto, Coles had celebrated his 96th birthday the week before, during Holy Week.

Stuart Boyer Coles was born March 19, 1917 on a farm near Woodbridge, Ont. After completing a degree from Victoria University in Toronto he enrolled at Knox College and studied under Rev. Dr. Walter Bryden. Ordained in 1942, Coles spent the next 15 years in congregational ministry.

While a minister in Oshawa, Ont., he witnessed the 1955 General Motors strike firsthand. It sparked a concern for what he later called, "the integrity, the dynamic interplay of evangelism and justice." A faith-based pursuit of social justice became "the heartbeat" of his life.

The same year, the church adopted the seminal confession which took the committee Coles chaired five years to develop.

Both church and nation are "bound to aid the other according to its appointed power and functions, but neither is given any right thereby to attempt domination over the other," states the confession. "We reject any doctrine which misconceives the Church as the religious agent of the State. We reject any doctrine which misconceives the State as the political instrument of the Church."

In the 1960s, Coles began working in national offices.

"[While there, Stuart] pushed the church to move out of its buildings and to follow in the way of Jesus in the great movements for justice of the day. He was one of three Canadian Presbyterian ministers who walked with Martin Luther King Jr. in the march from Selma to Montgomery in the civil rights movement," said Rev. Dr. Bob Faris, in a sermon at St. Andrew's King Street, Toronto.

In 1968, Coles helped organize an alternative to General Assembly, called the Congress of Concern. It produced "a hatful of reformational proposals intended to move a regressive denomination out of the past, nerving it to wake up and confront the perplexing realities of the present world."

The move created a schism between Coles and the PCC. In 1969, the two parted ways.

He joined the United Church and became the minister of outreach for Bathurst Street United, Toronto. He spent the next 19 years there, developing innovative forms of urban ministry, including the Good Friday Walk, an ecumenical stations of the cross in downtown Toronto. The event, which is in its 34th year, challenges participants to consider how Jesus' death on the cross might signal an urgent need for just and loving action in communities.

When long-time friend and collaborator, Rev. Jim Houston was asked by the UCC to put together a report on urban ministry, he turned to Coles. Houston—an Anglican minister, former Jesuit priest, and then-UCC employee—contributed cartoons while Coles crafted the text. *A Dream Not For the Drowsy* was published in 1980 and affirmed by UCC's General Council. The primer on grasping the nature of church in an urban context has since been touted by ministers from a variety of denominations.

After he retired in 1988, Coles continued to be involved in community-building enterprises. "Even in his 90s he was active, going to meetings, writing—banging away on his old computer," said Houston.

Prior to his death, Coles requested a Farewell Festival as an alternative to a funeral. It will be held at FoodShare on June 22. Coles wrote his own passion-filled obituary. You can read it on our website, along with a longer version of this article. ■

Seth Veenstra is the Record's *staff writer.*

ILLUSTRATION BY JIM HOUSTON

continued from page 50

As I read my Bible, it seems to me Christians living, working and praying together in community is core to what Pentecost is all about

swamp birch shrubs in the moonlight. Heck, they needed pruning anyway.

Later when we tired of our voyeurism and returned to bed, I started thinking about our history with the beavers on the lake. Twenty-four years ago when we purchased our cottage home on Lac La Hache, B.C., the deciding factor was the beaver and the loon floating on the calm water just off the dock. You just don't get a better Canadian wilderness scene than that. It sucked us right in. Soon after moving in, we established a firepit down by the lake and the beaver used to visit us while we were sitting around it in the dark. He would float in noiselessly like a navy seal until he was almost at the shore and then slap his tail as hard as he could on the water. It was an act of controlled aggression but still it was kind of nice in a Canadian sort of way. Every once and a while a small tree would go missing from our place or from a neighbour's and the beaver lodge over by the island gradually got bigger and bigger.

We never thought about it much until one spring night a fully loaded freight train was derailed on the other side of the lake. It was the beavers. They had built a big dam on a small creek into the lake and kept raising it higher and higher until the lake they were creating was several feet deep. This particular spring, the runoff was more than the beaver engineers had calculated. The dam let go in the middle of the night and the early morning freight train suffered the consequences. We kind of chuckled about that until one morning we awoke in the middle of a clearcut.

Beavers can do amazing things with their industriousness. They have the ability to build huge lodges, construct incredible dams, create enormous lakes, clear cut their neighbour's land and hijack local trains. One example of their industriousness can actually be seen from outer space. A while back, the world news media was buzzing about the world's largest beaver dam. It was first found using Google Earth. Apparently the dam, which is on the southern edge of Wood Buffalo National Park north of Fort McMurray, Alta., is almost a kilometre long. That is almost twice the size of the Canadian norm for mega beaver dams. Biologists estimate that it probably took at least 20 years to build. It was first discovered in 2008 but once discovered they have been able to track its development via NASA satellite imagery back to 1990.

Beavers are nothing if not industrious. That being said, a lone beaver's industriousness doesn't really amount to a hill of beans. Put a bunch of beavers working together on a project and what gets done can be seen from outer space. The beaver's secret is community. And as I think about this, it causes me to ponder Pentecost, Christians and Christian community.

As I read my Bible, it seems to me Christians living, working and praying together in community is core to what Pentecost is all about. But it's community with a definite focus. In John's gospel, Jesus promises the coming of the Holy Spirit in the context of instituting a discipleship community of love and unity, "that the world might believe" (John 17:21). In Acts, the coming of the Holy Spirit results in a discipleship community of love and unity in Jerusalem "and to the ends of the earth," that the world might believe (Acts 1:8; 2:46-47). In the Epistles, the Holy Spirit facilitates the discipleship community of love through the giving of spiritual fruits and gifts that the community "might be built up" and equipped so that the world might believe (Ephesians 4:12). The Holy Spirit of God is Christ's gift to Christian community that the world might believe. As the gathered community of Christ or the church, first and foremost we are meant to be a missional community.

I do not want to get too prescriptive as to what gets done in and through the Spirit-filled community towards the world believing, towards becoming a missional church. But something has to get done and in the New Testament church it is usually something quite remarkable and radical. It's the kind of thing that gets noticed from well beyond our own sphere, like Canadian beaver dams get noticed from outer space.

For those of us in our 21st-century comfortable conservative Christendom church pews, I think something radically missional like this is going to probably mean some pretty serious change in our thinking, practice and organization. In their book, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, Australians Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch challenge us to become a missional church: "What we propose is a reversing of the three mistakes made by the Christendom-mode church. The missional church, by its very nature will be an anticlone of the existing traditional model. Rather than being attractional, it will be incarnational. It will leave its own religious zones and live comfortably with non-churchgoers seeping into the host culture like salt and light. It will be an infiltrating, transformational community. Second, rather than being dualistic, it will embrace a messianic spirituality. That is, a spirituality of engagement with culture and the world in the same mode as the Messiah himself. And third, the missional church will develop an apostolic form of leadership rather than the traditional hierarchical model." ■

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of several books.

Visible From Outer Space

SO THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE.

BY DAVID WEBBER ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY FALLS

"What on earth is that thing on the beach? It's about half as big as a bear."

I snorted awake, fell out of bed and staggered out to stand beside my wife who was peering out the front room window. Shivering, realizing I was only clad in my short-handled Stanfield's and without teeth or eyes, I immediately tottered into the bathroom to at least put on a pair of glasses. By the time I got back to the window, Linda had the binoculars uncased and was peering out into the light of a full moon.

"Why it's a huge beaver, the largest I have ever seen," Linda said. "It's dining on what's left of our swamp birch shrubs."

"Quick, get the gun," I lisped. "Last time that beaver was here, he brought his whole logging crew and clear cut all our aspens in a single night."

"What's the point?" asked Linda. "He has already harvested all our trees except the two paper birch on the bench beside the house and you have them wrapped in chicken wire. Leave him be."

So that's what we did. We shared the binoculars back and forth and watched as the big beaver pruned our

continued on page 49

Brooding Wind That Blows Lonely

(to the tune of Four Strong Winds)

Brooding wind that blows lonely
Ocean tides that run deep,
All those change-breeding forces, thoughts and deeds:
So God's future sings a song
As we trudge or dance along
Knowing God will not be turned or [illegible]

God will never [illegible]
God will meet us [illegible]
Give us friends and foes to keep [illegible]
So until we die our deaths
Let us fill our lives with life
Great tomorrow like the bud of time's first dawn.

Jesus died in death lonely,
Jesus lives strong and free,
And He says you are not all alone.
Head uplifted, sally forth
To your errands south and north,
Marching to the hidden joy of God's trombone.

WORDS BY STUART COLES
From *Jesus and Justice: A Flamethrower's Songbook*, "A collection of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs from Stuart Coles and kindred pilgrims struggling with the disastrous divorce, chronically operational in our churches, between Jesus and Justice."

PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTO

"The first thing on the chopping block for any church seems to be Sunday school or child-related programming. This is especially true when the numbers are small. This is so backward to me. We should be investing in our children. Sharing with them and showing them that they are important, that they in fact are the future. We should let them know that they matter and we should be learning from them; after all Jesus did say unless we become like children there is no getting into the kingdom of heaven. This is a real problem for us. How can we learn from the children when we don't see them or place any value on them besides the 10 minutes they entertain us during the children's time in worship?"

—BECKY RUSHORNE-LAU, FROM MINISTRY TO MOTHERHOOD

There's a whole other magazine online.

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PUTTING WORSHIP FIRST + BEING SINGLE IN CHURCH + LOOKING OUT

PRESBYTERIAN RECORD

JUNE 2013

The Haynes Report

AN ENABLING VISION OF MINISTRY

"You have set yourselves a difficult task, but you will succeed if you persevere; and, you will find a joy in overcoming obstacles. Remember, no effort that we make to attain something beautiful is ever lost."

- Helen Keller

PRESBYTERIAN

RECORD

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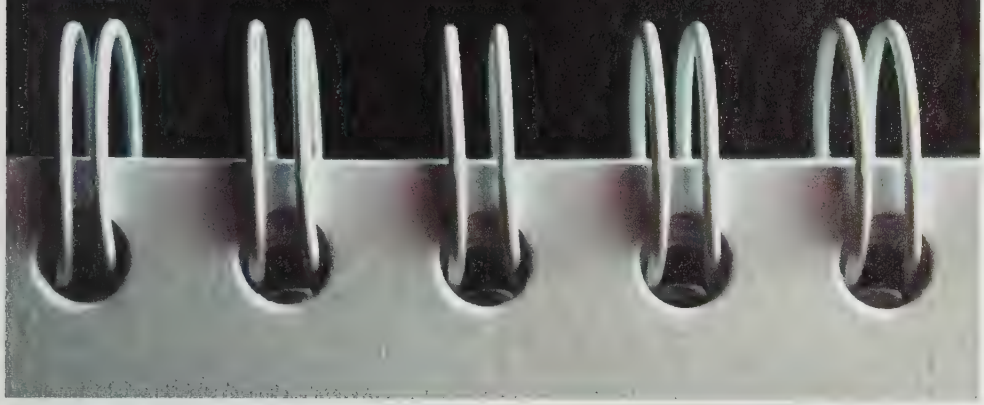

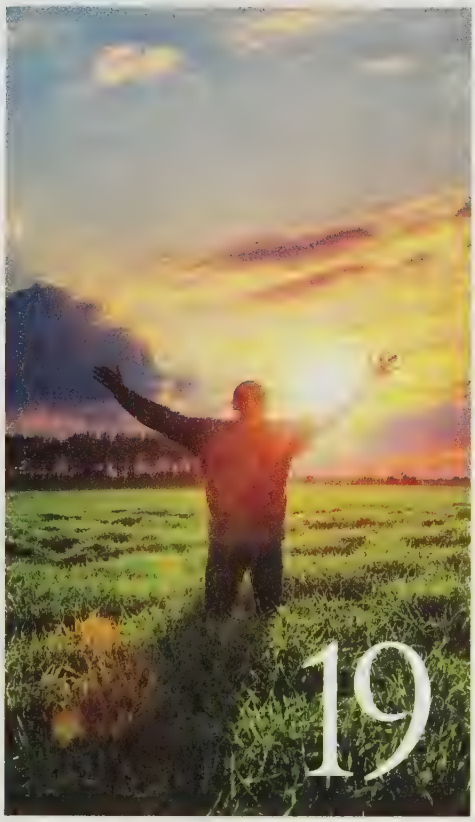

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Image by iStock photo

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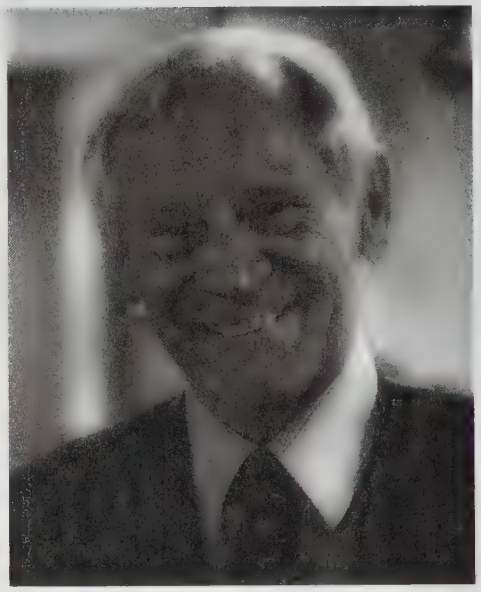
Continuing the Conversation

REPORT ON THE CHURCH IS MEANT TO SPARK DISCUSSION AND DEBATE. **BY RICK FEE**



George Santayana (1863–1952), Spanish-born American author, philosopher, essayist, poet and novelist most notably stated, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (*The Life of Reason*). He succinctly captured the idea that studying history is necessary to avoid repeating past mistakes.

The Life and Mission Agency is well aware of the numerous studies, think tanks and committee reports that have been produced over the years. Across the church, many of these have been derisively spoken of and dismissed with side comments such as "collecting dust on the bookshelf," "filed," "have never seen the light of day," etc. The LMA Committee did not wish to add to this list. There was, however, a strong desire to pull together material for easy reference and produce a working document to aid the committee in decision making.

The LMA Committee, today composed of 20 members drawn from across the country, appreciates the many good women and men who have faithfully served on committees, worked in offices, and convened excellent church-wide gatherings where prayerful thought was brought to bear on the state of the church in their time. Solid, creative and visionary ideas were presented in each generation. Many recommendations were implemented.

Today's pace of life has accelerated the church's anxiety about the future. Institutional change is sweeping throughout western civilization. Religious institutions are not immune. The PCC is not unique in its present circumstance and analysis of the future.

Today's pace of life has accelerated the church's anxiety about the future. Institutional change is sweeping throughout western civilization. Religious institutions are not immune

The LMA drew upon Gordon Haynes' considerable experience from his years of parish ministry and his time criss-crossing this country as associate secretary for Canada Ministries. We believed we could quickly have in hand a document that would summarize, inform, educate and challenge us with the realities that are confronting all levels of our national church. The report is a tool for the LMA to draw upon as we continually seek to faithfully live out our 1992 General Assembly mandate. That document challenges us to be flexible, creative and adaptive. As visionary church leaders, we are to facilitate what can be done at other levels of the church, work ecumenically and ensure national programs are effective.

The LMA appreciates the work that Gordon Haynes and his advisory committee put into this report. It was not designed to prop up anything on the bookshelf. It was always seen to be a tool for stimulating discussion and debate. I hope this conversation continues. It was seen to be a resource to encourage reflection rather than a list of items that had deadlines to be implemented. I appreciate the challenges presented and welcome all helpful, constructive input that it engenders.

History is appreciated by Presbyterians. We contribute to, and we learn from history. We are also called by our faithful and loving God to create our history by looking ahead. I am thankful that there are many church members who are engaged in the process of creatively imagining our future. It is an exciting and vital time for the Presbyterian Church in Canada. ■

Rev. Dr. Rick Fee is general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency.

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Letters

write to us

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.
EMAIL YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS ISSUE TO: **letters@presbyterianrecord.ca**

All About Jesus

Re Best Practices, May

Thank you for this foundational essay. The church is the body of Jesus Christ. Our job is to focus on knowing and obeying him. He proved 2,000 years ago he does know how to help his helpers grow the church.

BONNIE THOMSON, ONLINE COMMENT

John-Peter Smit has said it as well as anyone could say it. When we are about anything less than the Good News that Jesus is alive and wants a relationship with us, we become less than the church Jesus died to found. Thanks for the courage to say it is more about Jesus and less about Presbyterianism and St. Whatever church.

FRED STEWART, ONLINE COMMENT

Awesome article. I suspect this will be helpful to more than just a few of us.

TIM RAEBURN-GIBSON, ONLINE COMMENT

Absolutely. God and we, created in His image, speak into being those possibilities which are often just beyond our grasp by engaging others with the Living Word, Jesus. Sometimes we even use words. That's how we Christians create.

JAY BAILEY, ONLINE COMMENT

All About Jesus, Part Two

Re Your Turn, May

One of our children has been blessed experiencing the world as a member of the differently abled community and as such, sadly barriers are erected spiritually, physically, mentally, theologically and emotionally within church communities when it comes to "what it means to have these people invovled." We are all God's children and as a community, a body, we need to ask ourselves what it means to be Christ within our world, within our community, in spite of our differences, drawing the gospel circle wide for the inclusion of all, and stepping beyond our own self-imposed biases.

TY RAGAN, ONLINE COMMENT ➤

Be Aware

Re Pastor Speaks at Mosque, Community News, April

Presbyterians should be aware that the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Trinity, the Deity of Christ and that Christ is the Son of God, are all denied by Islamic teachings.

Check it out, friends.

THOMAS E. JOWETT, PICKERING, ONT.

Rev. Dr. Harris Athanasiadis responds:

My fellowship with people of the Muslim faith at the Noor is making me a better Christian. I think anyone who cannot understand that is missing something essential in Jesus' message. And I do believe with all my heart that the creator God embodied in Jesus Christ and living within and around us as Holy Spirit is working in ways well beyond our professions of faith. God will not be chained by our beliefs. We are growing in our understanding of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit all the time. At least we should be. Who says our understanding cannot grow through our interaction with awesome human beings who are professing Muslims? Mine is.

Burnout Prevention

Re Minding the Minister, March

Hi Fred, I enjoyed your article; thanks for sharing! It's very important these days, especially in a high-anxiety church climate. You'll be glad to know that I'm reading this on vacation with my laptop in Florida! Some great family time, and just enjoying the *Record* online while the kids nap!

MATTHEW RUTTAN, ONLINE COMMENT

Thanks for Sharing

Re The Good News, May

Thanks for the insights and perspectives. We can all use a little reality check and humility. You write beautifully and succinctly and your thoughts teared me up a bit. Thanks for sharing.

RACHEL, ONLINE COMMENT

Re People and Places, April

Thank you so much for including our $1,000 picture. How very beautiful it was to see when I turned to that page this morning! I was ready to give up in January when we were at the $700 mark, but the children wanted to continue until we reached our $1,000 goal.

Thank you for sharing their inspiring achievement!

HEATHER LEWIS, NANAIMO, B.C.

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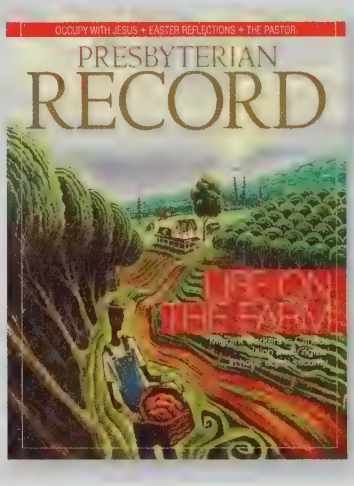

Take Action

Over the past several years I have become increasingly concerned by the constant use of the names of God as expressions of surprise or anger. On the TV, in movies and where I work it is fairly common to hear the expression, "Oh my God," but more often now, people say, "Jesus" or "Christ" when they are angry or frustrated. Is it not time for members of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, perhaps through our General Assembly, to send a message of protest about this rude use of God's names to the CRTC, CTV, CBC, or any other group that may have some ruling on what is allowed?

We as Christians pray the Lord's Prayer including these words, "Hallowed be Thy Name ..." We need to take action to let others know the misuse of His name is offensive to us.

You can talk to your sessions and presbyteries if you believe the national church should consider moving forward on this request.

IRENE OAKES, LADYSMITH, B.C.

Unfortunate Cuts

Re Assembly Council Prepares for Future, News, May

I was distressed to read of cuts to our contributions to university chaplaincies and to Kairos. These were great ways for our church to show its priorities—supporting students as they look to maintain and grow their faith at university (in the midst of the stress of classes, assignments and exams) and seeking social and environmental justice here in Canada and around the world.

I hope that the General Assembly in June agrees to biennial assemblies so that we can perhaps put some of those resources back into the programs that make our church what it is.

LAURA SMITH, OTTAWA ■

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online extra

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Youth Ministry at Evangel Hall

An important part of the ehm Youth Program is assisting students who are in danger of becoming homeless.

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Every year, dozens of students have been guided through the challenges of securing affordable housing. Some students even end up finding a safe place to live in the Evangel Hall Residence.

Another important aspect of our Youth Ministry is connecting vulnerable students to social services and guiding them through a difficult and daunting process. Erin assists youth applying for Ontario Works, finding information about food banks, furniture banks, medical and dental clinics and other community supports.

Thanks to your support, the ehm Youth Ministry is available to students in our partner schools, young people who participate in our Youth Centre programming, as well as youth from the surrounding community.

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Proclaim Jesus

JIM TAKES A TURN. **BY ANDREW FAIZ**

Last month I asked for your thoughts. A few of you took me up on it. Below is an online conversation I had with Jim Paulin:

Hello Andrew: I just have one comment for you. As has always been the case, I believe "there is need of only one thing," which is Jesus Christ Himself (Luke 10:42). The Good News, of course, is that he is indeed here in the Holy Spirit and is at work building his Kingdom. As long as we stay focused on Jesus and continue to proclaim him as Lord and Saviour, then whatever becomes of us we really have nothing to fear.

As for the *Record*, I think you and all the others who put it together are doing a fine job. —*Jim Paulin, Ottawa*

Thank you, Jim. Since the cover story for May was about best practices, let me ask you, and others who might be reading this: What are some best practices you have in your life for proclaiming Jesus? How do we proclaim Jesus when grocery shopping? How do we stay focused on Jesus when we're inching slowing during rush hour? How do we keep Jesus in our hearts when work dumps some of those dog-files at us and we know we have to slog through them no matter what?

I think we all have our personal strategies. I'd like to hear them. —*Andrew*

Hello, Andrew: First, I believe we proclaim our trust in Jesus when we find the humility, courage, stamina and faith to get out of bed and face the joys, the sorrows, the slog and the excitement of each day. Jesus said that he came so that we might live and live abundantly, so I think just living each day is a good and rather important place to start in the face of everything that threatens to break our spirits.

> Jesus said that he came so that we might live and live abundantly, so I think just living each day is a good and rather important place to start

Second, we proclaim our trust in Jesus when we find the courage to tackle the most difficult questions, including such chestnuts as the problem of evil. Indeed, a very hard problem is how any sane person in our time and place could possibly take Jesus seriously as God incarnate. To proclaim Jesus is in part to face and discuss such questions head on, hopefully in a right and always mutually respectful spirit.

Third, I think we proclaim our trust in Jesus in community and in particular in the community of the church. It's in showing up for church services, doing the grunt work of committees and dishwashing, and in being there for our church family members when they need it that we make a rather public statement of our faith. Those communities of the faithful don't need to meet in churches or to be led by professional clergy, although they certainly can be. But from the beginning, followers of Jesus have gathered to express and proclaim the faith, which will always have its place in addition to individual spiritual disciplines.

Fourth, we proclaim our trust in Jesus when we refuse to conform to the world's rules, to play the usual games of getting ahead at the expense of others, putting others down rather than building them up, bending or ignoring the rules whenever we think no one else might notice, criticizing God for not creating a better world, and generally behaving as if we are god and God is either irrelevant or non-existent. That is, we proclaim our faith in Jesus when, while accepting that we are no better than anyone else, we at least try on occasion to live as Jesus would have it. —*Jim*

I encourage the rest of you to add your voices to this conversation. ■

Andrew Faiz is the Record*'s managing editor.*

Justice Murray Sinclair, Madeleine Basile, Rev. Dr. John Vissers, Dr. Marie Wilson and Chief Wilton Littlechild prepare to place the book, *Becoming Neighbours: Stories About Healing and Reconciliation* into the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's bentwood box.

PHOTO BY BARB SUMMERS

Laughter, Music, Tears

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION IN MONTREAL. **BY KEITH RANDALL**

THE SETTING IS IRONIC. A chilly dawn in the heart of an awakening Montreal; the uncaring morning rush flooding past Place du Canada. On the unkempt grass and cracked, patched pathways on what was—is, some insist—Mohawk territory, 300 people surround a praying aboriginal elder. This is the Sacred Fire Ceremony launching the fifth national event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The elders, singers and drummers salute the four directions as the sun's first rays flash above Mary Queen of the World Cathedral, fall upon St. George's Anglican Church and the sleek CIBC tower to the west. Northward, the stately Sun Life Building appears unamused.

The Sacred Fire flickers and smolders a few feet behind the statue of John A. Macdonald, who is staring unperturbed at that young whippersnapper, Wilfred Laurier. A hundred yards further, the scent of burning sweet grass reaches a statue of Robbie Burns, whose words engraved on the pedestal capture a spirit with which the elders would surely agree:

"It's comin' yet for a' that,
That Man to Man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that."

The four late-April days in the nearby Queen Elizabeth Hotel—another irony noted by one residential school survivor in her statement—followed the familiar format of past TRC events, filled with laughter, music, many tears, some rage and countless expressions of hope for new relationships in a Canada recovering from the dark legacy of residential schools. There were both intimate and public moments of grace in which the Holy Spirit, the spirit of the Creator, seemed very present. The 12,000 who attended, and more than 5,000 in 30 countries who followed via live stream on the internet, were left to ponder the way to reconciliation. ■

Keith Randall is a Montreal writer-broadcaster and an elder at the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul.

Community News

Marjorie Ross attended Kairos' 40th anniversary ecumenical service in Toronto. Ross, who has served the Presbyterian Church in numerous capacities, is a former staff member with the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility—one of the 10 coalitions that became a part of Kairos.

Forty Years of Justice

KAIROS CELEBRATED 40 YEARS of ecumenical justice work by Canadian churches with a moving worship service at the Church of the Redeemer in Toronto in May.

Over the past 40 years, the churches through their coalitions have impacted public policies, and Canadian churches have accompanied brothers and sisters around the world through difficult times.

Kairos' executive director, Jennifer Henry spoke about the global partnerships as a cornerstone for justice work.

"If they [our partners] have courage in the face of the tremendous risks they experience every day, we must, in greater privilege and security, find that daily biblical courage to vision a prophetic future."

In 1973, church leaders toured across Canada to launch the 10 Days for World Development program. Through Project North, the churches stood in solidarity with the Dene people in calling for a moratorium on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline until land claims were settled. The report from the Royal Commission on the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline recommended a moratorium, which the Canadian government accepted.

From the 1970s to the early 1990s, Canadian churches supported South African churches in the struggle against apartheid. The Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility persuaded the Toronto Dominion Bank to cease lending to South Africa.

Canadian churches participated in the global Jubilee campaign to cancel the debt of poor countries. In 1999, 640,000 Canadian signatures were gathered and presented to Canada's Minister of Finance at an international meeting that year in Germany.

In 2001, 11 churches and church agencies joined to form Kairos.

Joe Mihevc, co-editor of *Coalitions for Justice,* which is about the first 20 years of the ecumenical coalitions, reflected on the churches overcoming theological and organizational challenges to form 10 coalitions that would respond to conflict, poverty, ecological crises and other issues. Mihevc observed that: "Church leaders saw that it was possible to do together what may be impossible to do alone." ■ *—Stephen Allen and Katharine Masterton, Justice Ministries.*

Clergy Deserve Free Parking

AFTER ROUSING the public's support, Rev. Keith McKee of St. George's, London, Ont., helped reverse a hospital's decision to charge clergy parking fees while they visit patients.

McKee said he has offered pastoral care to in-patients for more than 30 years. Most of that time he parked for free.

"I visit the hospital four times a week on average. Usually I have two or three people from my congregation who I'm visiting. Then I look at the clergy list to see who's from out of town and stop by to say 'hello' and introduce myself and offer to say a prayer," said McKee.

Two years ago, London Health Sciences Centre asked him and

other clergy to purchase a yearly $50 subsidized pass.

In mid-March, McKee and other clergy received a letter from LHSC administration informing them they would need to start paying standard parking rates, beginning on April Fool's Day.

According to the administration, the change was made in order to cover the costs of maintaining the parking facilities, which are not supported by provincial funding.

The news came as a shock to McKee, who said his congregation had already approved their 2013 budget.

He estimated parking would cost $30 per week for the congregation—an annual total of $1,560—a significant amount for small congregations.

McKee appealed to the community in a Letter to the Editor, published in the *London Free Press* on March 14. A reporter from the newspaper picked up the story; his article was published the next day. By then the public was mobilizing.

"There was an outpouring of support from the community. After the story was published I received a lot of phone calls on Friday and Saturday, both from members in my congregation and members in the community who told me they would be calling the administration to express their concern," said McKee.

'One man told me while he wasn't religious, and didn't go to church, he recognized spiritual care as very important'

"One man told me while he wasn't religious, and didn't go to church, he recognized spiritual care as very important for patients' healing journey."

The next week the administration informed the public the hospital foundation would subsidize parking for clergy; meaning a return to a $50 yearly pass.

"I feel very buoyed by the community of London. It's affirming to hear how much they value clergy visits," said McKee. ■ —*Seth Veenstra* ➤

Churches Deal with Taxes

Two churches in Brampton presbytery have resolved their property tax woes.

Trafalgar, Oakville, and St. Andrew's Memorial, Mississauga, both faced substantial property tax increases when their buildings were reassessed.

Trafalgar was hit with a yearly tax bill of over $9,000 for the 2011 year, a huge increase from the $1,300 a year the church had paid previously for a portion of the building it rents out to a daycare.

In its reassessment of the church property, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, which is responsible for classifying and determining the value of properties in Ontario, decided a larger portion of the building should be taxed as commercial space.

The church filed a request for reconsideration.

"We argued that they made an error and misunderstood the way we use our building, sharing it with a daycare," Rev. Kristine O'Brien, minister at Trafalgar, said in an email. "Although we did include the good work we do in our community, they were only concerned with the detailed account of how much we use the spaces in question."

MPAC denied the church's request for reconsideration, so the church filed another request, this time including floor plans and room dimensions as well as a very detailed account of how the spaces were used, by whom, and for how many hours each day of the week.

The second request met with success. MPAC recommended the church building be exempt from all municipal property taxes and the Town of Oakville agreed. Tax rates are set by municipalities, which rely on assessments by MPAC.

"This whole process took about nine months," said O'Brien. "Although we were paying $1,300 a year, then assessed at $9,500, we are now paying $0. Hallelujah!"

St. Andrew's Memorial in Port Credit, part of the City of Mississauga, saw their property taxes increase by several thousand dollars because of a reassessment. The church rents space to two schools.

A committee of session filed a request for reconsideration with MPAC and a tax appeal with the City of Mississauga under the Municipal Act, alleging the church had been overcharged due to "gross or manifest error."

An inspector from MPAC agreed the initial reassessment had been incorrect in some places. The size of the spaces, the age of the building, and non-exclusive use by the schools all played a role in the reassessment said Donna Gallant, a member of the session committee.

MPAC reduced its assessment and the City of Mississauga granted the church's tax appeal.

"We were pleased with the result," said Gallant. Although the new assessment still resulted in higher taxes than the church was charged in previous years, she said the increase was "very workable for the schools" which took on the extra expense when the church renegotiated their annual rental contracts. ■ —*Connie Wardle*

Dr. Kennon Callahan

Callahan Launches New Book

IF YOUR CHURCH doesn't have a lot of programs, "that's God's way of blessing you," said Dr. Kennon Callahan as he launched his new book, *Living in Grace*, at the church's national offices.

Over time, focus has shifted from program-centred churches to growth-centred churches and then to mission-centred churches, Callahan said. "This book honours grace-centred congregations."

"In the first century what counted was the grace of God. Welcome to a new first century. The 21st-century is one of the greatest ages of mission the Christian movement has ever known. And in this time what people long for and look for when they come to a congregation is the grace of God."

"There was a fellow some centuries ago who said, if you want to build a ship, don't organize people into task forces and collect wood. Teach them the love of the sea. My paraphrase on that is, if you want to help congregations and people, don't organize them into task forces and busy projects. Teach them to love the grace of God. And the ship will get built." ■ —*CW*

Presbyterians Nominated

TWO PRESBYTERIAN AUTHORS are being recognized for their works by the Word Guild, a Canadian organization supporting Christian writers.

Larry Brice's book, *Confident Faith: In a World That Wants to Believe* has been nominated for four awards. From Port Rowan, Ont., Brice is minister at St. Paul's, Burlington, Ont., founder of Reachout Ministries, and the host of *Reachout for Life*, a Christian interview program airing on Crossroads Television.

"[T]his book is popular in the judging because it draws upon so many of the best ideas from the historic Christian denominations—from Roman Catholic, to Anglican, Presbyterian, and Baptist theologies, etc., which thus offers a very wide appeal to Christians and non-Christians alike," Brice told the *Record*. "The last chapter, My Story, is a personal testimony to the God who is not only proven to exist beyond a reasonable doubt by logic and reason in the book, but shares a faith in a personal God who is also proven at times in the most severe suffering. It is my prayer ... that it would be 'faith building' for every reader and also lead to confident faith in God at times of great adversity."

Brice also has a new book out, *The Uncomfortable Church: Can Gays Be Reconciled to the Body of Christ?* Drawing from scripture, the PCC's Church Doctrine Committee, eminent conservative theologians, and insights from the author, the book explores the moral issues surrounding gay and lesbian marriage and ordination, and the relationship of homosexuals to the church in general.

"I found it possible to maintain our historic view of scripture and the traditional definition of marriage, while still warmly affirming many of the gains homosexuals have made in our time bringing gays and lesbians into mainstream society," said Brice.

Jayne E. Self, a member at Tweedsmuir, Orangeville, Ont., is nominated for *Death of a Highland Heavyweight*.

Self's work has been rewarded in the past. Last year, her first mystery, *Murder in Hum Harbour* was honoured by the Word Guild for best mystery novel. And her article for the *Record*, Boogie to the Front (January 2010), based on the moderator's trip to Ghana, received an honorable mention in 2011 by the Canadian Church Press.

"I believe stories should be more

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than entertainment. They should make you think—at least the good ones," Self told the *Record*. "I'm honoured that *Death of a Highland Heavyweight* has been nominated for a 2013 Word Award. For me that means the judges see more to my mystery than a fun afternoon with quirky characters in a Nova Scotian village. They see the story's underlying question: when does faith cost too much?"

The awards gala happens June 12 in Mississauga, Ont.

The *Record* will feature a review of Brice's latest book in September, written by Rev. Dr. Kevin Livingston of Tyndale University College and Seminary, Toronto. ■ —*Amy MacLachlan*

A miner in a Nyabibwe mine in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Teenager Rallies for Congo

ALONG WITH BEING THE DAUGHTER of a Presbyterian minister and a Guatemalan political refugee, Anna MacDonald is a passionate advocate for social justice.

On April 22, she joined hundreds of high school students and members of the local Congolese Association in a rally in front of the legislature in Winnipeg. The youth held up signs and electronic devices with the slogan: "No more blood in our phones."

Canadian companies are heavily invested in mining operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Among the country's mineral resources are large deposits of coltan, a black metallic ore from which the element tantalum can be extracted. Tantalum is used in electronics like cell phones, computers, tablets and gaming consoles.

"The big thing we wanted to put emphasis on is how we as Canadians benefit [from unethical practices in Congo]," the 18-year-old said from her home in Winnipeg. "We wanted to show the government we care about this issue and lots of high school students are interested in this issue."

At the rally, the group called for an end to human rights abuses in Congo and encouraged the provincial and federal governments to pass legislation which could hold Canadian companies accountable for how they extract, use and trade materials from countries where there are conflicts.

> 'If you do something wrong, you should be held accountable for that. I don't think some people should suffer for the benefit of others'

"If you do something wrong, you should be held accountable for that," she said. "I don't think some people should suffer for the benefit of others."

Her social justice group, the Met School Justice League at Garden City Collegiate, also held a human rights day to raise awareness about the issue. Keynote speakers addressed topics like corruption, the use of rape as a weapon of war, and the use of local militias to clear out villages in locations where mining companies want to set up operations.

The group plans to hold a benefit concert on May 28 with proceeds to go to Doctors Without Borders.

"Where this ties into my church is there are a large number of Congolese members in my congregation and it's a growing demographic," she said.

"I've grown up in the Christian life. Being a minister's kid can be really hard sometimes and I'll be honest, I've struggled with my faith. But I'm surrounded by good people who don't pressure me to think one way or the other and they've helped me to be strong in my faith and believe in God and follow His path.

"A big influence of mine was my mother who was a political refugee ➤

CP IMAGES

Man Arrested for Church Break-Ins

A 22-year-old man was arrested following a break-in at North Tryon Presbyterian, P.E.I.

Police arrested the suspect at the church around 2 a.m. on April 11 as they responded to an alarm.

A search of his home by the RCMP uncovered items associated with nearby South Shore United Church, which had been broken into earlier in the night.

He was charged with two counts of breaking and entering and failing to comply with an undertaking. ■

—with files from the Canadian Press

from Guatemala. I grew up knowing her story and ... I know God wants me to carry on in what I believe in and fight for it even when I'm faced with negativity. This is a controversial topic because not everyone wants legislation in place."

MacDonald aspires to become a documentary filmmaker and investigative journalist. She completed two documentaries as part of her high school classes: one focused on the issue of Canadian mining companies and violence in Congo, and the other featured political refugees like her mother. She graduates this year and said she plans to study film and global studies at the University of Winnipeg and then seek a master's degree in journalism. ■ *—CW*

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North Saskatchewan Presbytery Launches Mission Fund

THE PRESBYTERY OF NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN is urging its congregations to dream big, and is supporting those dreams with its Fund of Possibility.

Created in November 2010, the Fund was born thanks to the closure and subsequent sale of several congregations. After carefully investing the initial seed money and watching it grow, the presbytery is ready to fund new projects and just wrapped up its first application process from churches within its bounds.

Each application is eligible for up to $10,000, with up to $25,000 to be granted this year. The deadline for applications was June 1.

"A few years ago, several congregations ... were closed. It was a difficult time for us as we grieved together at the ending of several ministries. But even as we grieved, we spoke to each other about the hope that we have," Rev. Amanda Currie, presbytery clerk, told the *Record*. "We reminded each other that our decisions to allow some ministries to come to an end—rather than slowly using up all their resources until they absolutely had to end—would mean the possibility of new mission and ministry in the future."

Each congregation that closed (which included Circle West and Parkview and the amalgamation of McKercher Drive with St. Andrew's, Saskatoon) recommended a plan for mission to the presbytery and to the national office. Some of the funds went to the PCC's New Church Development Fund. In Saskatchewan, several local missions, including the Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry run by Rev. Stewart Folster, benefited from special gifts.

> 'Hopefully the Fund of Possibility will keep reminding us that God is always calling us to new things'

"[And] Some funds went to the presbytery itself and were earmarked for new missions and ministries," said Currie. "We're not talking about starting up new congregations yet, but hopefully we are opening our eyes and ears to see and hear what God is calling us to do in our communities to reach out with the gospel in word and deed.

"Hopefully the Fund of Possibility will keep reminding us that God is always calling us to new things, and that nothing will be impossible with God." ■ *—AM*

Do you have news to share? If so, please let the *Record* know. Contact Amy MacLachlan at amaclachlan@presbyterian.ca, and join the conversation!

Art, Music and Poetry Teach About Mental Illness

BOARDING HOMES MINISTRY DEVELOPS NEW CURRICULUM. **BY SETH VEENSTRA**

Aiming to deepen the church's relationship with those who experience mental illness, Boarding Homes Ministry is distributing curriculum kits for free to congregations across Canada.

BHM, an ecumenical ministry, creates Christian community by linking residents of privately operated boarding homes with visitors from congregations.

Currently, 19 boarding homes in southern Ontario are participating in the ministry. In 2011, BHM was awarded the E.H. Johnson Award in recognition of the ministry's cutting edge work.

The curriculum, named "Cat Jeoffry," is inspired by an 18th century poem written by Christopher Smart. Committed to a crude mental institution, Smart yearned for the company of his cat, Jeoffry. After a friend brought Jeoffry to the hospital, the poet wrote the famous 124-line ode, "For I Will Consider My Cat, Jeoffry."

"Jeoffry represents the ideal Christian," explained Rev. Rodger Hunter, BHM's chaplain.

"He brings joy in the midst of agony and affliction. He is God's emissary in a difficult place. He is joyful, prayerful, worshipful, compassionate, desires justice, is fun and brave."

"The curriculum turns to this poem to help illuminate the issues of caring for those with mental illness," writes Hunter in the kit's introduction.

"The lessons aren't just specific to what I do in these homes. They have to do with life within families, within the church. If one in five people experience mental illness, chances are we all know someone who is struggling."

"Jeoffry in moonlight" by Sue Miller

Though the material exists, in part, to raise awareness, it's meant even more to generate action.

"Really, we don't need more information. We need more heart," said Hunter.

To make the subject matter connect with the heart and the mind, Hunter commissioned a variety of visual artists to recreate key moments in Jeoffry's ministry. Only after he saw their work did Hunter begin writing the lesson plans, using their artwork and lines in the poem to frame discussion questions. Adding audio to the visual components, Hunter also co-wrote 12 of 14 songs that appear on an accompanying album.

Funded by the Women's Missionary Society and the Ewart Foundation for Theological Education, the curriculum took about three years to complete.

In part, it was the artistic process that extended the timeline, but Hunter also wanted the material to be accessible to people of varying ages. So he developed three separate, age-specific studies.

"On a gentle level, we want to introduce children to the language of mental illness. Because often the language is brutal, ugly. There's a need for better language.

"I needed something to put in churches' hands. To start the discussion and then lead it in the direction of nurturing communities. The goal of this is to celebrate God-among-us in community," said Hunter.

In order to properly celebrate, there needs to be a reciprocal relationship, said Hunter. While offering care to those living with mental illness is important, the caregiver should be aware of how they, too, are blessed by the relationship.

After he received the E.H. Johnson Award on behalf of BHM, Hunter told the church's General Assembly his hope for BHM's ministry is to help the church and people living with mental illness join together in "a shaggy choreography of community."

Hunter said the goal now is putting the kit in the hands of anyone interested, free of charge. (But if congregations donate $100—the expense of putting one kit together—it would allow BHM to produce more.)

"I'll mail you a copy, give you a call in three months and we'll talk." ■

Seth Veenstra is a freelance writer and member of Central, Hamilton, Ont. You can write to him at sethveenstra@gmail.com.

Communion on the Computer

AND OTHER WAYS OF SHARING CHRIST. **BY BRADLEY CHILDS**

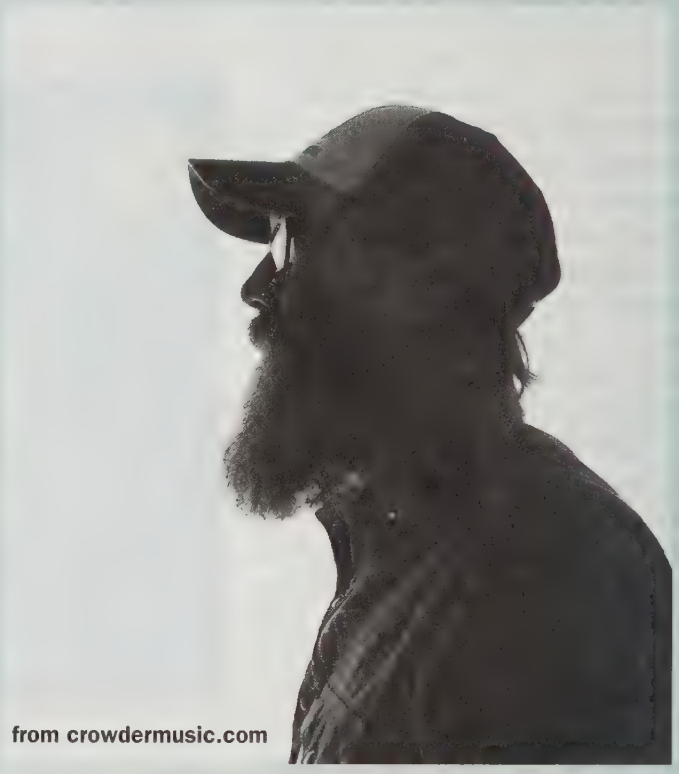
BIBLE

The Bible with Sources Revealed was put together by Richard Friedman. I say, "put together" because this is not a Bible translation, per se. Friedman took the first five books of the Bible and colour-coded them according to the Documentary Hypothesis.

If none of that makes sense to you, here's the break down. A number of years ago many theologians, most notably Julius Wellhausen, believed they had discovered in the first five books of the Bible a number of different voices from different time periods. Specifically, they found four major time periods and four voices: the Yahwist from the kingdom of Judah, the Elohist from the kingdom of Israel, the Deuteronomist from the Reformist period and the Priestly from the Kohen period of exile. As the hypothesis goes, a fifth source called the "Redactor" or editor(s) then compiled the different sources into the five books we know today.

Enter Friedman. Friedman has published a version of the first five books of the Bible in which a different colour represents each of the four sources and black is used for the Redactor. While we must remember that this is one man's version of a theory where there is much disagreement, Friedman has done something very interesting. It's not for everyone, but if you're a bibliophile I have a feeling this will be on your wish list.

FIND IT @ **amazon.com**



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COMMUNION

The Lord's Supper is sacred. It is a holy mystery. It is somber but joyful. It is us lifted up into His presence. And it is a gift of God. So let's celebrate it as often as we can with as many people as we can. Let's get on board with the "new things" God was talking about in Isaiah. Let's do Twitter communion.

In fact, Rev. Tim Ross, a Methodist minister in the U.K., did just that. He was looking to create a "worldwide" communion service. Christians from around the globe were asked to prepare their own bread and wine and partake in communion over their cell phones by way of "tweets." Tim wanted to encourage unity in the Christian faith and said "anyone can join." Maybe we should.

Say what you will, but the General Assembly approved the use of technologies in communion services just last year. I think I'm going to do one myself ... and I think I'll invite the whole city to join me. Oh, just one problem. Presbyterians don't technically have an open communion. Oh well, all baptized people in the city then. Does that work?

FIND IT @ **ship-of-fools.com/features/2010/holy_communion_in_six_tweets.html**

MUSIC

David Crowder was a Christian worship band leader at a large church in Waco, Texas. He put out nearly 10 albums, toured a bit and and worked at youth conferences and the like. But lately he's everywhere. He's playing rock clubs, not Christian clubs but rock clubs... lots of them. He's also all over Facebook and YouTube. Why? Well, he's started doing old-timey gospel music with banjos, mandolins, fiddles, acoustic guitar and an upright bass. In Crowder's own words, "it looks like the Appalachian Mountains exploded." And people love it. So Crowder goes to a rock club and sings songs about Jesus and kids with no religious background whatsoever sing along with him in droves. It's defying explanation. And ... it's awesome. It's kitche, its Americana, its Jesus. Somebody buy me a ticket to the show.

FIND IT @ **youtube.com and crowdermusic.com.**

Rev. Brad Childs is minister at First, Regina.

GETTY IMAGES

A Plea to the West

TWO CANADIAN MUSLIMS SPEAK OUT. **BY RAHEEL RAZA AND SALIM MANSUR**

Since 9/11 many Muslims around the world, including those who belong to Muslims Facing Tomorrow in Canada, have been warning our compatriots of the nature of Islamist threat worldwide, of the extent to which Islamism is a virulent ideology of warfare (*jihad*) and a radical reorientation of Muslim societies to comply with Sharia that repudiates modernity in all its forms. This ideology has brought death and devastation within both the Muslim and non-Muslim world.

Just this year alone we have encountered many examples of this threat: A potential plot for a mass terror attack on a passenger train out of Toronto by two Islamists. Three Canadians (two were Muslim converts) involved in the terrorist attacks on an Algerian gas plant deep inside the Sahara desert. A recent suicide bombing carried out in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, in which a Canadian of Somali origin, and a former student at York University in Toronto, was identified as one of the suicide bombers. Add to these the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, the Madrid train bombings in 2004 and the homegrown Islamist terrorist attacks on the London public transit system in 2005.

There have also been failed plots, as in the case of the Times Square bombing attempt by Faisal Shahzad, an American resident of Pakistani origin, in May 2010, or the foiled plan of the Toronto 18 to carry out a series of mass terror attacks in southern Ontario in 2006.

The West needs to take seriously the war declared by Islamists against infidels, Zionists, Israelis and Muslims opposed to Islamism.

> It's important that Christian and Jewish communities become aware there's an ongoing mammoth struggle internal to Muslims

Islamism is an aberrant strain of Muslim thinking that can be traced back in Arab-Muslim history to the earliest years of Islam. Its defining ➤

characteristic is intolerance of others, including Muslims, and glorification of violence as a martyrdom exercise against all who disagree with Islamist renditions of Islam.

As Muslims in Canada, we have repeatedly called upon our fellow Muslims to publicly disavow all relationships with Islamists and Islamism, to repudiate unconditionally the aberrant thinking and teachings of Wahhabism (and its related schools among Sunni Muslims) and Khomeinism and to cooperate—without any hesitation—with law enforcement and security agencies of our home country, Canada.

But our voice will not carry weight unless and until our government, our political parties and politicians at all levels of government—federal, provincial and municipal—take seriously the Islamist threat and denounce Islamism without any inhibition or equivocation.

We cannot any longer afford to allow our mainstream media, our educational institutions and our civil society associations to wallow in political correctness and, intentionally or not, give cover to the Islamists in our midst through public relation exercises, such as inter-faith dialogue.

Moreover, as Muslims, we found ourselves accepted in the West with immense generosity, kindness and without any discrimination by the majority of the population. Many of us carry deep physical and psychological wounds of bigotry and violence directed against us as Muslims by other Muslims driven to fanaticism by Wahhabi and Islamist teachings. As survivors of Muslim violence against Muslims, our gratitude in finding refuge and a new home in Canada and elsewhere in the West is immeasurable.

> We have called upon our fellow Muslims to disavow all relationships with Islamists

Only when it becomes certain that the West will not any longer tolerate the preaching and practice of Islamism will we witness increasing numbers of Muslims stepping forward to repudiate those imams and religious leaders in our mosques and mosque-related institutions who have been instrumental in pushing Islamism among Muslim youth and radicalizing them for *jihad* or mass terrorist operations.

Finally, as Muslims in the West, we want to advise our compatriots that the Muslim world is currently in an upheaval of historic proportion, as Europe once was when Christendom was in transition from the pre-modern to the modern world of liberal and secular values.

In our ongoing outreach to non-Muslims, following our mandate of dialogue and discussion, it's important that Christian and Jewish communities become aware there's an ongoing mammoth struggle internal to Muslims. They would do well to support progressive, liberal Muslim voices of freedom without resorting to hate and propaganda. This is important because knee-jerk reactions and visceral outpourings of angst do not solve the problem, but only feed into the Islamists' agenda that Islamophobia exists. Your support and prayers mean a lot to us.

The internal struggle among Muslims will likely continue over several generations as the Muslim world painfully makes its transition. But the support of the West can be decisive in hastening this transition, and this can only occur when the Western public understands what is at stake and how it can make a positive difference.

The weeding out of Islamism and the Islamist threat lodged inside the West is the essential prerequisite—or first step—in defeating the global warfare or *jihad* of Islamists, and in helping the Muslim world reconcile itself with modern values of science, democracy and human rights. ■

Raheel Raza is president and Salim Mansur is vice-president of the Council of Muslims Facing Tomorrow.

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OUR FEATURE ON LIVING FAITH

Living Faith is a declaration of faith of the Presbyterian Church. You can download it at presbyterian.ca. We suggest you read the passage being discussed each month.

ADDITIONAL READING: Members for Eternity (March 2011), and Ministry? What Ministry? (January 2012). The articles can be found at presbyterianrecord.ca.

Our Highest Calling

PUTTING WORSHIP FIRST. BY SARAH TRAVIS

LIVING FAITH 7.1-7.3 (THE CHURCH, MINISTRY AND WORSHIP)

Many of us are accustomed to dividing our lives into compartments so that church, ministry and worship are simply categories to be added to a list, along with our job, family responsibilities, entertainment and leisure time. According to some philosophies of healthy living, it is important to keep these categories separate, lest our faith leak into our job, or our leisure pursuits distract us from our career path. If that is how we live, then it makes sense that each category is deserving of a certain portion of our personal and material resources. Our jobs and families might take the most resources, while church, ministry and worship receive a much smaller portion of our time, talent, energy and attention.

But *Living Faith* has a different perspective on the organization of our lives. Church, ministry and worship are not simply categories or ➤

activities that affect some of us, some of the time. They are not tasks to be scheduled according to our availability. This is what *Living Faith* says:

"The church is Christ together with his people called both to worship and to serve him in all of life. The church ... is one family under God whose purpose it is to unite all people in Jesus Christ." And, "All Christians are called to participate in the ministry of Christ."

All. All of life. All of us together. These words seem to suggest that our whole lives—individual and communal—belong to God in Christ. And then comes what might just be the most challenging, even shocking, statement in this chapter: "We have no higher calling than to offer the worship that belongs to God day by day, Sunday by Sunday." No higher calling? If worship is the most important thing, then I am living my life upside-down. If worship is the highest calling, in what way will we need to reorder our lives?

Recently, I taught a course about worship. As we began to talk about the purpose and content of the course, all of us (teacher included) made the assumption that "worship" is the hour on Sunday morning when we gather in sanctuaries. The class realized very quickly that worship cannot be limited to Sunday mornings, or Sunday evenings, or Wednesday afternoons. Worship is something more. Unless we think God wants us to spend the majority of our lives sitting on hard wooden pews, we will need to redefine worship.

What if we define worship as "an encounter with God" that can happen anywhere, anytime? In that case, worship is a verb, not a noun. Worship is not something confined to a particular time and space, but a movement in which the Triune God encounters us and we allow ourselves to be encountered. It is a movement in which God pours out love and grace and mercy upon us and we respond with singing,

Worship may be our highest calling, but it is rarely our highest priority

with prayer, with silence, with work, and play. Worship is a living thing that refuses to be contained or limited.

When I was visiting a patient in hospital, a doctor came into the room. Just as he began to check in with his patient, his iPhone beeped. He looked at the screen and said, "It's time for my prayers." He was Muslim and set his iPhone to remind him of his commitment to pray (there really is an app for everything). He finished his conversation with his patient and then went off to join in conversation with his Creator. How beautiful. That doctor did not separate his work from his faith—both are done in service to God.

It is not easy to make faithfulness a priority. Even those of us who try to fully live out our baptismal vows will likely spend more time in a given week watching television, accounting, drying our hair, folding laundry, driving, or shovelling snow than engaging in encounters with the divine. This is true even if we understand worship as something dynamic and organic that extends beyond Sunday morning. Worship may be our highest calling but it is rarely our highest priority.

It is easy to berate others for getting their priorities wrong. Pastoral ministers especially like to lament the semi-divine status of hockey and soccer practice. Yet those of us who judge the priorities of others might want to check for the plank that is interfering with our own eyesight. In keeping with the vision of *Living Faith* that all of us belong to God, we should remember that all have sinned and fallen short. We are in this together, and almost all of us struggle to orient our lives toward the Holy One. That is the nature of being human. That is why God encountered us in Jesus Christ. So that we could focus, reorient, move toward the Giver who has already moved into our neighbourhood.

Living Faith challenges us to think carefully about living out our baptismal vows in the midst of a culture that has other plans for us. You are not alone if you struggle with these high expectations. The good news is that we are not finished yet. God is still working on us. *Living Faith* tells us that Jesus "intercedes for the world to which he came and for which he died." This is a Saviour who prays for our freedom, for our liberation from the distractions that turn our eyes away from him. We already belong to God, even though we don't fully understand what that means or how to participate fully in God's life. The God of the universe continually tugs on our hearts, gently calls us away from everything we think is important, in order to remind us that our truest purpose is to worship and serve the Creator of all. ■

Rev. Dr. Sarah Travis is minister-in-residence at Knox College. She lives in Oakville, Ont.

Mary Anointing Jesus' Feet by Peter Paul Rubens

Embodied Forgiveness

CALLED TO THE GIVING AND RECEIVING OF MERCY. **BY LAURENCE DEWOLFE**

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
June 16, 2013

Luke 7:36-8:3

Two things stand out for me as I look at this gospel reading. First, the lectionary editors have clapped the first verses of chapter eight onto the end of the story. Once again Mary Magdalene is placed alongside the "sinner" who cleans Jesus' feet with her hair, perpetuating the myth of Mary as prostitute. We see it in stained glass windows and illustrated Bibles: Mary with her hair down, in a posture of submission. We don't know what Mary does for a living, just that she has independent means of supporting Jesus. Her seven demons aren't named. Whatever the disorder of her life may have been, there's no reason to call her a whore or paint her hair the iconographer's devilish red.

The woman who bathes Jesus in her tears in the Pharisee's house is a cartoon character. She serves an important purpose in the story. We should read this story as a two-page spread in a graphic novel. Every detail tells the tale. Which brings me to the second thing, the sensuality that drips from the pages. Action and word evoke sensations of uncovering, touching, warming, kissing. The scene begins with men, reclining close together at the table, eating with their hands, speaking mouth to ear, touching. We see a woman enter, called a sinner. What has she done? A woman is allowed little agency or freedom to sin in any way other than with her body. Has she been party to adultery? Has her position in the community forced her to prostitution? Some of the men at the table know her!

She continues in sin by revealing herself to a stranger, letting her hair down in his presence. Do we hear her sobs? We see her tears. We smell the ointment. We can almost feel the warmth of her caress.

This scandalous story frames another tale, about a business transaction. Jesus catches his host with language he seems to understand best. We Presbyterians, who ➤

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like to say the Lord's Prayer our own way, also understand the business of debts and debtors. But Jesus quickly turns back to the realm of the senses. Does he leave us behind?

Jesus indicts his host. He should have greeted Jesus with a kiss and a hug, seen that his feet were washed, and touched his forehead with fragrant oil. Giving and receiving hospitality are full-bodied experiences. So is showing gratitude for sin forgiven. So is forgiveness itself.

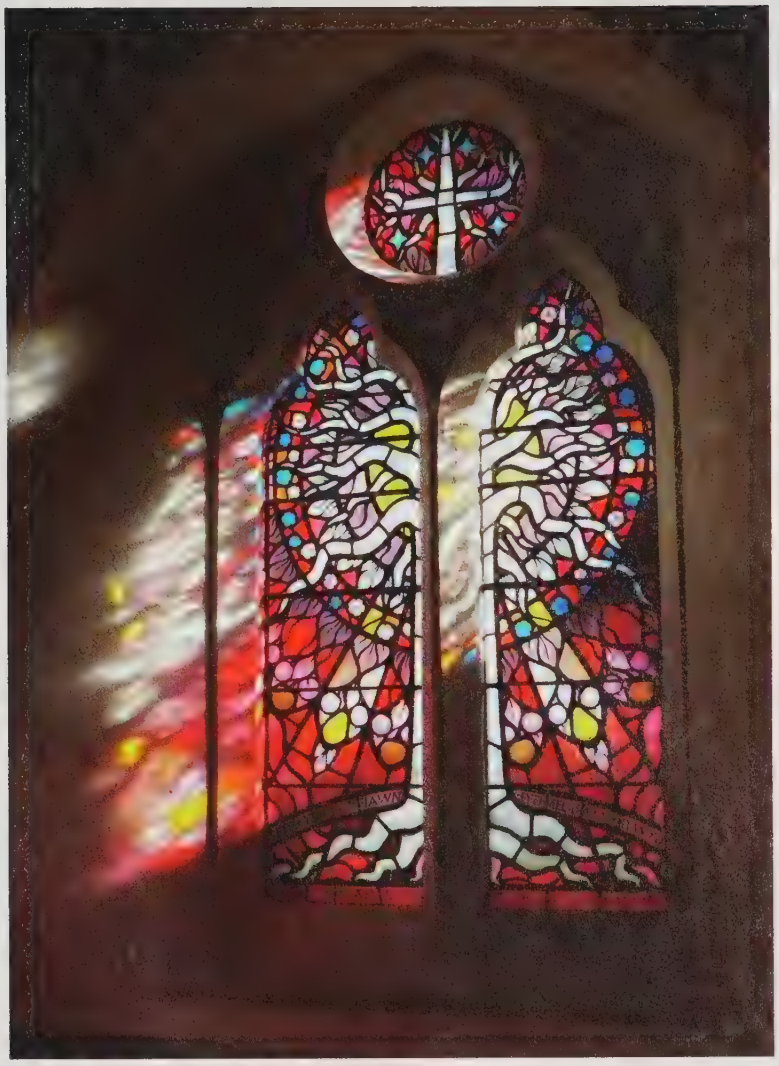
Debt is usually contracted and repaid these days without any cash changing hands, or any hands touching. Creditor and debtor rarely meet. On very rare occasions when debts are forgiven, mercy is applied electronically. There's no embrace to seal the deal. But forgiveness can't be given or received by email, on paper, or in theological principle.

Giving and receiving forgiveness aren't real if real people don't come close enough to see one another, hear one another, touch one another. Our gospel story adds smelling sweat and tasting tears to the experience. The addendum warns us that reaching into our pockets, opening our purses, and getting on the road toward a whole new life may result.

If we don't appreciate the sensuality of the story, maybe the sequel speaks to us. Mary Magdalene, who by Easter Sunday is arguably the most important of all disciples, and her friends don't hold back. They know a good deal when they see it, and they invest.

Forgiveness is embodied in reception and response. Jesus isn't here to touch us, or to accept our touch when we reach out. We're here in his place, to offer that sensation to one another. Sometimes we feel our hearts strangely warmed, sometimes not. Always we're called to give ourselves, flesh and spirit, to the giving and receiving of mercy. ■

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe is on sabbatical from Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.



ISTOCK PHOTO

Looking Out My Window

FINDING WAYS TO BE GOD'S LIGHT. **BY SHAUN SEAMAN**

The back wall of our church's sanctuary is all windows. During worship, when I am not looking at the congregation, I look out these windows. I enjoy watching the snow start and stop, the sun come out, the rain begin, the wind blow. Our church is on a hill and so the visible expanse is wonderfully enormous.

From my office window, beyond the beautiful huge pine and elms, I can see a busy residential area and a not so busy cemetery. At a nearby four-way stop, drivers pause to watch for dog walkers, joggers and cyclists. I love looking out windows, perhaps too much—it keeps me from writing a sermon, or preparing for a study group, or paying full attention to Jian Ghomeshi on CBC Radio.

While at the North American Conference on Christian Philanthropy, I was reminded of the value of looking out the window.

While describing the various ministries of his congregation, Rev. William Barnes from our host church in Florida, spoke to us about the sanctuary. He emphasized the massive windows at the front and the huge cross located outside those windows. He said, "We were intentional about this design. We gather *in here*, so that we can go *out there* and make a difference." He went on to give example after example of things going on "out there" in the local community and ➤

We in the church know that the demands of taking care of 'our own people' are enormous. There is always more we could be doing

how the church found ways to connect with, support, and respond to needs.

There was nothing particularly new about what Rev. Barnes had to say. Perhaps it was his obvious passion. Perhaps it was the blatant practicality of the kinds of ministries in which his congregation was engaged—music lessons provided by retired players to children who could not afford lessons, child care provided by grandmothers or others for single moms who were engaged in training for employment, respite care for primary caregivers whose loved ones are living with Alzheimer's.

We in the church know that the demands of taking care of "our own people" are enormous. There is always more we could be doing. Since returning from the conference, I notice that I am looking out my sanctuary and office windows asking myself, "What is going on out there and how can my church support it?"

The local food bank is an obvious one. Most churches help out there. But the list of what most of us do "out there" is relatively short.

In Kanata, just outside Ottawa, we have a vibrant arts community and a large athletic community. We have single parents, seniors, separated and divorced people. There are all sorts of communities within our community. But when was the last time someone from our church contacted any of these groups to ask, "How can our church support you?"

Imagine what the local art association would say if I were to appear at their door and say, "We think you bring something of real value to our community. We appreciate the good work that you do. We would like to support you in some way. How might we be able to do that?"

There is a community resource centre in our town—I can almost see their office by looking out my window. They are government funded but their resources are limited. I wonder if I, or someone from my church, should take a walk over there and ask them if there is a particular need or demographic that could really benefit from our support?

Here at Trinity, our vision statement is "To be God's light in the community through the love of Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit." But when I reflect upon the amount of time and energy I and others spend on the people and activities here inside this church community, and compare that to the amount of time and energy we spend on people and activities outside this faith community, I have to wonder how we are being God's light. We are light in the same sense that a brightly lit hotel or restaurant is. Here we are! You should stop here! Come on in!

I wonder if we should be taking our light out to them, rather than staying on our own comfortable turf, inside our own doors and windows. While looking out my window, I became aware of a very popular local pub/restaurant that recently experienced a devastating fire. This place was an historic community landmark and people loved to gather there. A large staff is now unemployed. The young couple who owns the pub have two young children and now have no income. They are not connected to our church in any way, but we share a community. We are looking for ways to reach out and support them through this difficult time.

I am still enjoying looking out the windows of my church, but now, as well as tracking the weather, I am thinking about what we "in here" could be doing "out there." I am thinking about how what we say and do "in here" equips and calls us to do "out there."

There are not many conversations between Jesus and his disciples about numbers that are dropping, or not being able to afford to keep the doors open, or considering amalgamation or renting. I can find hardly any record of meetings about contemporary or traditional music, chairs or pews, hymnbooks or screens. Mostly I see them going "out there," showing up and asking, "What can I do for you?" and "How can I support you?"

I am determined to spend even more time looking out the window and asking myself what I can do to be God's light, "out there" in my community. ■

Rev. Shaun Seaman is minister at Trinity, Kanata, Ont.

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ABRIDGED VERSION

PWSDevelopments

The quarterly newsletter for Presbyterian World Service & Development • 2013 Edition, Issue 2

Indifference is Not an Option

BY KEN KIM, PWS&D DIRECTOR

AS CHRISTIANS, WE ARE AN EASTER PEOPLE IN A Good Friday world. So much of what we see in the daily news are Good Friday stories of tragedy, death and loss. As easy as changing channels, there are many who shut themselves off from the pain and suffering happening in other parts of the world. Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, said, "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference." Rather than accepting indifference, the Presbyterian Church, as a community of faith, recognizes that indifference to what happens in our world is not an option.

Our church responds together through PWS&D to ensure that we make a difference in a broken world. Together we respond out of faith – not simply to support a good cause – ensuring that the word "indifference" is never associated to our Creator, to Jesus Christ or to our church

In December 2012, I travelled to Afghanistan to see the projects PWS&D is undertaking with our local partner, Church World Service-Pakistan/Afghanistan. We were met by incredibly hospitable people – warm and welcoming friends, colleagues and strangers – who shared with us their hopes and dreams for a peaceful life in a country that has witnessed more conflict than we can ever know.

Generations of children have grown up using discarded explosives, weapons and items of war as their only toys. Generations of Afghans have lived in foreign lands, dreaming of a time when they could return to their homeland to raise their children and plant their crops without fear. They are getting a new start with our helping hands.

With the support of Presbyterians in Canada, farmers struggling with hunger and malnutrition are planting crops and repairing traditional irrigation systems to make the desert-like land bloom once again.

Members of the *shura* – the community elders or religious council – are actively working for peace in their communities. They give their experience, wisdom and resources to encourage their village members to educate all children, boys and girls alike.

We visited schools and asked girls what they wanted to do with their studies. I thought I knew what they would say – to be a teacher or a doctor, as I had heard before. Only one wanted to be a teacher. The others surprised me with their responses. An engineer said one, traditionally a male profession. Others said a lawyer, a human rights ▶

worker, a judge and a politician. These girls are forces of renewal and hope for their communities and their country.

These are communities working together to build a better future and indifference is not an option.

We have the ability to make a difference in our world through the shared mission of our church. We recognize God in the face of each person we encounter and work to ensure God's justice, peace and reconciliation are shared with all in a hurting and broken world.

Throughout our history our church has responded to situations of immense pain and suffering because indifference is not an option. Today, we are still called to respond. Syrians are facing a brutal internal conflict and the forced displacement of the civilian population is similar to that experienced by Afghans. PWS&D is currently working to respond to the crisis in Syria, but can only do so with the continuing support of Presbyterians. Pray. Reflect. Act. Indifference is not an option. ■

Farmers are growing crops to support their families. Above: PWS&D Director Ken Kim in Afganistan.

Responding to the Crisis in Syria

PWS&D remains concerned by the dire situation facing many civilians in Syria who are displaced or have fled the conflict and are living as refugees in neighbouring countries. The crisis is severe – refugee camps are growing with such speed that host countries and humanitarian agencies can't keep up with the immediate needs of water, sanitation, food, shelter and health care. It is estimated that the number of displaced people will top four million and the number of refugees will exceed one million by June 2013.

PWS&D is responding through the ACT Alliance to help meet immediate needs through the provision of food assistance, shelter, hygiene kits, clothing and non-essential food items. We are hoping to expand our response to this devastating crisis.

Please continue to pray for the people of Syria during this time of great uncertainty. By making a donation to PWS&D you will ensure families who have been uprooted from their homes will receive the support they need. Make a donation through your church, mail a cheque to the PWS&D office, donate online or call 1-800-619-7301 ext. 291. Please mark all donations "Syria Relief." ■

actalliance

PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY, ACT ALLIANCE

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GETTY IMAGES

Standing Alone in the Church

WHY IS BEING SINGLE SECOND-RATE? **BY CHERYL BRADBEE**

Back in the summer of 2009 I mentioned, in a blog entry, the negatives of being single within the Christian community. I received several responses, from both sexes, all in agreement with me. I was somewhat taken aback by the number of responses. If, according to the apostle Paul, singleness is the higher calling, why is it so often treated as a form of failure within the Christian community?

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul writes that if people are able, it is much better to be single than married. However, we are all to live according to our call from God. In this he appears to be echoing Jesus in Matthew 19:10-12, when he states that remaining single is better than marriage followed by divorce. Yet the church today is "focused on the family," to reference one prominent American ministry. And singles suffer for it.

Think of how radical it was for Jesus and then Paul to speak and write such words. In the context of Jewish society, where everyone is to get married and produce children, there was no place for single women except as widows. Everyone had to do their duty to the community and marry. Yet both Paul and Jesus flip that on its head. To do one's duty to God and community, it is better to be single as long as one is content to live that way. At some point in our lives, especially for women, many will be single simply due to demographics and life span differences with men. So perhaps it is time for the church to re-examine how singles are viewed and treated within the Christian community.

I can only speak for my own experience. As a single woman who has never been married, I have gone

through several phases in my relationship to the church. The first phase, from ages 20 to 35, was a time when I was seen as a marriage-in-waiting. It was obvious I would get married as no one could imagine why I would not and it became clear to me that singleness was not a desirable state, despite what the apostle said. It was expected that I should be looking for a good Christian male. Alas, good, Christian single males are sparse on the ground and, to be blunt, few attracted me. So I passed through my attractive and fertile stage without snagging a mate. That clearly meant I was a failure at the most important achievements of a woman's life.

Now I am 55 and still contentedly single. It would take someone amazing to persuade me to change my status. But over the years, I have watched my gifts to the church disdained, my voice silenced and ignored, and a subtle contempt now governs many of my Christian relationships. The church is geared towards producing and raising up the next generation of believers. A childless woman, without a man attached to her, really has little place within the church; unless, of course, I would like to teach Sunday school.

I know there is a place for women to engage in ministry within the church but I often find it is married women who fill those spaces. It seems there is something about them being attached to a mate that validates and legitimizes their ministry within a church community. Perhaps it is feared that without the governance, even the very subtle grounding of a male in my life, I am not to be trusted with ministry. Unless, of course, I want to teach Sunday school.

I am an intelligent woman with three Master's degrees, two of them in theology. I recently finished a PhD focused mainly in the disciplines of environmental and urban history. I teach at colleges and universities where I am respected. I am a published author. And yet, somehow, much of that is discounted when I attempt to speak to issues in the church. It has become too painful to be treated this way. And like some of the singles who wrote me in the blog, I have now, for the most part, left the church. In a world where many people pass through phases of singleness due to divorce, or a partner's death, or simply due to the vagaries of life, it is just much easier not to try to find a place within the Christian community despite my desire for community. It all makes me wonder what Paul would say about singleness in the church today. ■

Cheryl Bradbee just finished her PhD, and currently teaches at colleges and universities in the Toronto area. She is ready for new challenges.

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All Are Valuable

URGING MINISTERS TO FIND COMMUNITY IN SMALL GROUPS. **BY FRED STEWART**

Last month I attempted to make the case for how important it is for our ministers to be part of intimate spiritual communities with their peers. I also shared the priority and focus we at the Renewal Fellowship are prepared to put on encouraging and aiding as many ministers as we can to find or form such a group.

I think it is important to anticipate a few of the challenges that might keep some of our ministers from participating in a group. I don't think it's coincidental that I have experienced similar challenges when encouraging congregations to commit to regular small group gatherings. Hopefully what follows will help some overcome things that could be holding them back.

The first challenge I hear is that many are too busy. I am sure many of us do experience time management issues. It is a significant investment to set aside hours on a monthly basis for group gatherings. To those who aren't sure if this investment of time is wise, we who do participate in intimate spiritual communities have something to say. I have heard my own experience echoed by many. They speak of how significant and life changing their time in a group seems to be. Finding the time and keeping it a priority becomes much more manageable once the value becomes real and personal.

Next, introverts (people who process internally and expel energy in group activities) and those who are shy or socially reticent remind me that for them, this kind of gathering is often neither pleasant nor helpful. (I have had more than one acquaintance explain that this is why they don't attend church.) I try to understand what it would feel like to be introverted and to not be connecting with others. It's impossible, as I'm a true extrovert who loves social interaction. But I do know this: as disciples of Christ we are not called to seek comfort zones that reflect our personality and wiring. We are called to love God and each other and it is in small communities that we can grow in faith and grace and encourage each other.

Further, some ministers are not initiators or inviters. The truth is, if it is left to them, they will never become part of an intimate group. This places both responsibility and accountability onto other ministers. We need to be always on the lookout for those who need an invitation. Just as we would encourage our congregations to keep inviting and not give up, the same is true here. Imagine, if you will, your persistence resulting in someone who is lonely and disconnected finding a place of spiritual and emotional healing and refreshment.

Last, I'll mention an elephant in many small groups: the person who requires extra grace. They may talk too much. They may share inappropriately. They may drag down the group or seem to distract it from its purpose. One famous preacher said that if you think your small group doesn't have one of these, it's because it's you. I think it is enough to realize that God chooses the people placed in our path. Our response requires prayer, divine wisdom and love.

All are worth it. All are valuable. ■

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship. fred@pastorfred.ca. renewal-fellowship.ca.

GETTY IMAGES

Only Heaven is Far

OPPOSITES AND OPPOSITES. **BY JOSHUA NYANGULU**

Back home in Malawi there is a popular saying which may be literally translated as "only heaven is far." This is widely believed to have been put in place as a way of fostering encouragement so that one does not give up on something. It may, of course, be understood in line with a common, rather universal saying: "The sky is the limit."

I reflected on the rationale behind this concept after spending over 22 hours in the belly of a bird, flying from my home to yours here in Canada. I was very tired sitting in the third plane that would be in the air for the next eight hours, finishing the distance of more than 13,000 kilometres to a foreign destination where my forefathers had never stepped throughout their lives—yet to them, only heaven was far.

Upon my arrival in Toronto I discovered that geographical distances separating us creates additional differences in many aspects. The first thing I noticed was the change of time. My wristwatch betrayed me so much that I almost threw it away, as it was six hours ahead of the Canadian time. This made me realize that I was in a different time zone very far away from my home, Malawi. I was fully enveloped with amazement. However, I believe Andrew Faiz, who picked me up from the airport, thought it might be fatigue that had done its bigger part on me.

Another difference which quickly came to my notice was the cars driving on the right-hand side of the road, unlike in Malawi where we drive in the left lane. As we drove from the airport I kept thinking we were in the wrong lane; I also noticed that all cars had their steering wheels in the left hand-side. I wondered if all I will be seeing is opposites and opposites.

Before I could be allowed rest and settle in my apartment, I was taken to a nearby supermarket to buy some food items. I discovered that almost anything one may need was available here; in terms of stock, it was far ahead of the standards of supermarkets back home. When coming out of the shop I felt something was missing—there were no vendors outside the shops coaxing us to buy their merchandise as they do back home.

While I still want to agree with my ancestors that "only heaven is far," I would add by saying that "Toronto and Malawi are far apart." However, on the other hand, the distance separating the two countries has not proved to be a barrier to communication. Maybe that is what my great-great-grandparents foresaw. ■

Rev. Joshua Nyangulu is the literature officer for the Livingstonia Synod, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, in Mzuzu, Malawi. He is working at the Record *until the end of June. You can follow his blog on our website.*

PHOTO BY ANDREW FAIZ

The Haynes Report

AN ENABLING VISION OF MINISTRY

In September 2011, Rev. Gordon Haynes, then the associate secretary of Canada Ministries, was assigned a "research project to provide a report for the Life and Mission Agency for its use in charting a way forward with vision and an enabling spirit for ministry. It will provide a realistic understanding of the challenges and offer recommendations to the LMA that each presbytery could take for further study and the LMA can incorporate into future planning."

The Haynes Report—The Life and Mission Agency Research Project 2011-2012—is cleanly and clearly written. It pulls no punches. It tells the harsh story of church decline and the Presbyterian Church in Canada's inability to respond effectively to that decline over the decades. It is an honest report.

This is not the first such report to be done within the PCC. By Haynes' own account, his completes a baker's dozen over a half century. Perhaps this proves our running joke—which would be funny if not so true—that we love committees more than action. We didn't get here suddenly; we watched it happen slowly over decades while we made notes and had lots of meetings.

The portion excerpted here is mostly the second half of the report. The full report can be found at presbyterian.ca and linked to this article at presbyterianrecord.ca. The other reports listed here can also be found at both addresses. After you have read this excerpt, and perhaps sought out the full report online, we suggest you re-read our September 2012 interview with Rev. Haynes.

Haynes' task was to research the past, the demographic trends and think about the future of the church. He had an advisory group which helped him discern the information gathered. He filed the report a year later.

There is much to chew here and we hope you will add your voice to the discussion at the bottom of this article online at presbyterianrecord.ca. —*Andrew Faiz*

THE REPORT

Since the 1960s, the Presbyterian Church in Canada has authorized, and received, numerous reports looking at the state of the church. I am not confident that this is a complete list (I keep finding others), but it is an impressive list even as it is:

PAST REPORTS

- 1964—Ross Report (final report in 1970)
- 1969—Life and Missions Project (LAMP) Committee Report
- 1971—Declining Church Membership
- 1978—Special Report on the State of the Church
- 1980s—Church Growth to Double in the 1980s reports
- 1988-1992—Vision Statement and Strategic Planning
- 1994—Live the Vision final report
- 1995—State of the Church Report
- 1996-1997—Think Tank report
- 2000—Interim Report of the LMA
- 2001—Study Group to research denominational membership decline
- 2002-2011—Reports to General Assembly by the Long Range Planning Sub-Committee of the Assembly Council ➤

The various reports display a deep concern for the church, and each tries (from its own perspective) to give wise counsel to the church. There is a consistent unease that there is something that needs to change, and honest attempts to deal with that unease from different starting points. Some reports made recommendations that brought about changes still felt today—the emphasis in the early reports of involving women and youth in the decision-making parts of our church, for example. Others suggested changes to the structure and even (in one report) suggested loosening the rules for a couple of years so that presbyteries and congregations could more easily experiment with new ways.

Peter Coutts, a member of my report's advisory board and recently retired minister at St. Andrew's, Calgary, summarizes the common points from many/all of the reports:

COMMON POINTS FROM REPORTS

- The origins of the study and/or report were impelled by a perception of "crisis" which had to do with pragmatic, institutional issues such as membership decline and income being less than expected.
- The need for congregational renewal and health is a major theme.
- Youth/young adult involvement in church life is seen as critical.
- The need to improve vitality in fostering meaningful worship.
- Religious leaders are "out of touch," or congregations need to be relevant to the times.
- Members feel remote from the courts of the church.
- Survival mentality in congregations is prevalent.
- Congregations are not pro-active enough to reflect on program needs and its mission focus.
- We are hesitant to talk about our faith and to evangelize.
- There is a lack of clear understanding of our national purpose and mission as a denomination. After the vision statement of 1989, the emphasis shifts to the need for presbyteries and congregations to develop clear purpose and mission understandings locally.
- The church is slow to respond to issues at times.
- The report proposes a restructuring of the national organization/staff as a needed response to the current reality.
- Clergy do not get sufficient training in the practical elements of ministry, or need to be trained to fulfill the current priorities for congregational life.
- The confrontational style of decision-making used in church courts must be improved.
- Areas of change must be explored with the grassroots before changes are implemented.

A SCENARIO FOR 2020

According to the statistics in the Acts and Proceedings, the PCC had around 204,000 members in 1964. By 2010, that was down to 105,886 (a net decrease from the year before of 3,537). If we continue as we have without major changes, we see a scenario where the PCC will have (according to our own figures) around 65,000 members in 2020. That is about two-thirds the size of the church in 2010.

Because of the age of members in our congregations, we would see a similar decline of about one third in the number of congregations (meaning just over 600 congregations) and a decline of 40 to 50 per cent in what is given to Presbyterians Sharing.

Some reading this report may dismiss this forecast as either unsubstantial or alarmist. However, we would make these observations:

First, over the past four decades the rate of membership decline has been steadily increasing. Second, we are able to anticipate in the near future a sharp increase in the rate of membership decline given the significant number of congregants who are in their 70s or 80s and the current average Canadian life expectancy, which is 80.7 years. Finally, there is no indication that the direction of the cultural trends of our society are changing, which means societal culture will continue to have a significant and growing impact on our future.

It is sobering to imagine the impact this degree of membership loss will have on congregations as well as the impact this number of congregational closures will have on presbyteries. At both these levels we will see an increase

in organizational and financial strain and thus growing stress. The coping capacity of congregations and presbyteries will be challenged. However, these challenges will also motivate many congregations and presbyteries to imagine new ways of being. This gives us hope.

For the LMA, the impact of this decline will have two consequences. First, it will change the kind of ministry the LMA has to congregations and presbyteries.

It will have two emerging priority roles:

- To provide resources and support for congregations and presbyteries as they deal with the organizational and financial strain.
- To act as a midwife assisting the birth of a new kind of Presbyterian Church which will emerge at the grassroots level of congregations and presbyteries.

The second impact of decline will be the reduction of the financial resources available to the LMA to deliver this changing ministry.

Congregations under financial stress are forced to reset financial priorities, and when push comes to shove, Presbyterians Sharing is frequently, and usually reluctantly, pushed down the list of priorities. This is illustrated by comparing the change in total congregational income to congregational support of Presbyterians Sharing in recent years.

Between 1996 and 2006 total congregational income increased 44 per cent while congregational support for Presbyterians Sharing increased only 3.6 per cent over the same period. Support for Presbyterians Sharing plateaued between 2002 and 2006, and since then it has been declining. Between 2006 and 2011 it has decreased an average of 1.7 per cent annually.

Over the coming decade, we can anticipate that the annual decreases in congregational support for Presbyterians Sharing will grow disproportionately as compared to membership decline because congregations, as is their habit, will give priority to the maintenance of the status quo of congregational life.

What if we make changes? We would expect that we will still see a smaller church in the future. The difference will be that the decline may not be as great, and we would at least be a church better able to minister to the changing culture around us.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

The authors of the 1995 State of the Church Report concluded by saying, "Given our denomination's past experience of trying to bring change bureaucratically and 'top down' we frankly remain unconvinced that anything we recommend would ultimately make any difference."

Looking at the scenario presented above, and the statistics underlying it, there is a very real possibility that we can get bogged down in our current reality. In fact, that is what has been seen through the denial and lethargy that abounds. We are too prone to getting caught up in the needs of the organization, the institutional church, and seem to give priority to keeping our current organizations going instead of to our calling in faith. This can, with time, lead to a loss of confidence that God is with us and for us. And yet, that is counter to our understanding of the gospel. We need to remember the promises Christ made about his church and regain (as the church) our confidence in the gospel and ➤

NEEDS OF PRESBYTERIES

Over a couple of months earlier in 2012, I had the opportunity to meet with a majority of the presbyteries in our church to discuss what they saw in the future and to hear what they need to continue to function in that future. Some of those meetings were in roundtable groups made up of a number of presbyteries together. Others were meetings with a single presbytery at a time.

At those meetings, I asked them what they saw God calling them to be, what barriers they saw to achieving those goals and what was needed by them to overcome those barriers. A number of presbyteries sent in reports on their discussions on the questions that were asked. One presbytery reported that they had actually been doing a similar study for the past year, and sent me a copy of their findings.

I want to concentrate here on what the presbyteries saw themselves needing from the national church.

I have tried to put their responses into a number of categories.

First, I will address what they identify as needs, and then I will look at their suggestions as to what is needed to make this happen.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO, CONTINUED

its ability to speak to our culture.

We need to focus our calling and goal on being missional in all that we do. This is our calling and goal.

Evangelism is an important part of what we do. Put plainly, churches need to become better evidence for God in our society. This means that we need to do a better job of faith formation both for newcomers and established members, helping people to be able to integrate faith into life and then articulate it.

Our style has to be one of experimenting and entrepreneurial/adaptive behaviour. The emerging church arises from experimentation. As a church, we are too often afraid of failure. We need to be willing to give permission to fail.

We need to recognize what makes the PCC different from other denominations and how we want to be seen as different. If we can no longer be all things to all people, what do we want to be and do well?

Primarily at the congregational level, we need to give support for this faith nurturing and faith formation. We may need to build more of an educational component into our sermons, engaging people in the content.

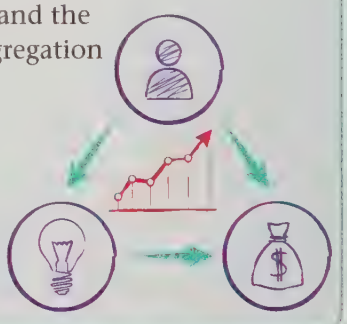
Coming to faith is a process, and is not a one-event occasion. This means we need to help people mark this path and their moments on it. We need to discover the real, deep meaning of baptism and reaffirm their baptism on occasions later in life.

We need to be more involved in investing in congregations than propping them up.

In all that we do, we need to be authentic, prophetic and pioneering.

RESOURCES

1. **Educational material and resources that are user friendly. This would include online resources and would touch on topics such as:**
   - Events such as Stewards by Design and the Emmaus Project
   - Preserving "sacred space"
   - Clustering/amalgamations/closing
   - Clergy care
   - Vital/healthy/real communities in spite of size
   - Things that are going well
2. **Resource people/staff who are familiar with and understand the local situation and context.** These would be facilitators skilled in leading congregations through proven processes that produce change in people's attitudes and the direction the congregation is heading.
3. **Financial help, through money for new projects.**



TRAINING

Training in a number of areas for congregations and presbyteries:

- Relevant leadership training
- Cross-cultural training
- Training laypeople to take a lead—or participate in leadership—at worship

There was also some discussion in most meetings on changing the training of clergy—to make them more available (this came from what could be described as rural presbyteries), better equipped to minister in the context to which they had been called and to open up the possibility of alternative forms of ministry, such as tent-making ministries.

LEADERSHIP

This was different than training leadership. It was for leadership itself. The wish was for "people who think outside the box" and developing priorities on what to focus on.

EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH

Requests were for instruction on how to approach others (evangelism) and how to start new churches.

NEW WAYS TO DO MINISTRY

There were a number of requests for models of new ways to do ministry:

- Ministry without buildings
- Tent-making ministries

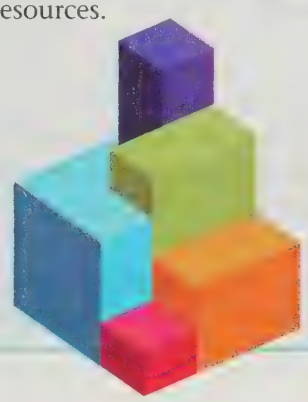
There was also a request for a re-visioning of the church and to look at alternate ways of doing ministry.

STRUCTURES

A number of suggestions came up here. Although they came from felt needs, they were more specific suggestions. I am putting all of them here so that you might get a sense of the feelings of the participants:

Some of the suggestions are generally for the LMA:

- Put more money into regional staff rather than national staff.
- Keep us connected to national committees (to be a corresponding member of the committee isolates us from the church as a whole).
- Fewer administrators and more visionary leadership.
- Require each presbytery to make/remake a ministry (vital communities) with resources provided by LMA.
- Help presbyteries to change.
- Twinning strong congregations with churches needing leadership or other resources.



Some seem to be suggestions for the church as a whole:

1. Revise structures and polity
We don't have good mechanisms to create partnerships with other denominations or institutions. We have lots of rules that prevent it from happening. You almost have to leave the PCC in order to experience partnerships.
2. Release the churches so that they can do innovative ministry.
3. Abolish synods. Give presbyteries permission to encourage growth/health/vision. And presbyteries give permission to congregations to have vision.
4. Encourage the use of terms for elders and board members.
5. Hold a General Assembly for renewal. Give permission to use the Book of Forms as "guidelines"—allowing more flexibility.
6. Hold alternating General Assemblies, one year focusing on business, the next concentrating on spirituality. Gathering together not so much for business but for prayer, scripture study, celebration, support, etc. A holy fair?

THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

There were requests for changes to be made to theological education. New models of theological education were to be considered, along with new models of congregational missions.

BEST PRACTICES

The sharing of best practices was mentioned. It was said that we can learn from the best practices in congregations—what is their ethos, their mission, their ministries and their processes? We should share what has been used in other areas and churches, to be inspired and educated by them. This would give encouragement to envision different models.

PRIORITIES

- The church needs to be missional.
- There needs to be a national priority for a ministry to seniors.
- Comforting those congregations that are sick.
- Rural churches need to be seen as being as important as urban churches.

It should be noted that a number of these expressions of priority are really cries for help from people who are saying, "*We* should be a priority."

COMMUNICATION

A number of themes arose in this area:

- We need to communicate the vision, mission and spiritual direction of the national church.
- The national church needs to listen to what is happening in the congregations and presbyteries.
- The need to tell our history.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO MAKE THIS

Out of this large number of comments by presbyters across Canada, there seems to be a few common elements:

- There needs to be more resources closer to the front line. Whether it is sharing "best practices," or having regional people available to help, there was a general feeling that the resources had to be more immediately available and under some level of control by those who used them.
- Our church has its share of conflict, which seems to show up in many different ways in congregations and presbyteries. I have heard from presbytery after presbytery that it is close to paralysis because of conflicts that have gotten bigger and bigger. At all levels, we need to learn how to handle conflict so as to bring about the best possible outcomes.
- The issue of changes in the training of clergy came up

There was also some advice for the national church:

- There is a need to move from a "plan and push" perspective of top-down resourcing to discovering what is emerging and evolving, providing astute support, and then sharing this so we can all benefit.
- "Get out of head office and into the churches."
- The church needs to be prepared for a radically different form of Presbyterianism.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

There were a few other needs suggested that may not fit easily into any of the above categories, but were considered important by those who presented them:

- We need to see decline as an opportunity that might push us into risky, but necessary, partnerships.
- Remember that our ultimate loyalty is to Christ and our ultimate hope is in him.
- See who God has contributed, even in small/closing congregations.
- The importance of prayer.
- Will the LMA even exist in 10 years?

APPEN?

time and time again. This usually was in terms of "practical" training in things like leadership, conflict management, etc.

One further point needs to be made. During the conversations I had with the presbyteries, it was mentioned by four of them that they questioned if they would even exist in 10 years. Others talked about being much smaller than they are at present. Concern for the future is constant. We may be hesitant to change our structures, but we need to understand that the structure of our church is going to change in the near future, whether we do anything about it or not. We need to prepare ourselves for those changes, so that we are able to continue to live out our faith in a changing world.

LEADERSHIP IN A TIME OF CHANGE

The question of leadership is important throughout the church. It is therefore not surprising that leadership came up in almost all of the conversations I have had over the last few months. Leadership is seen as being even more important as we face a future (and a church) full of change.

And yet, it was generally felt that we don't place our hopes and goals high enough. We often focus on keeping what we already have alive, or keeping our congregation open. We do this rather than what best witnesses to Christ in an area, or for the sake of the congregation that follows us.

While creative leadership throughout the church needs to be encouraged and developed, one particular area of concentration should be helping our clergy further develop skills in leadership, first through leadership training becoming part of the curriculum in seminary, and then through opportunities for continuing education. Perhaps we need to make upgrading of leadership skills through continuing education compulsory. The greatest leverage point that the national level of the PCC has in influencing change is the training of our clergy in our theological colleges and post-graduation education.

It was the feeling of the advisory committee that presbyteries need to take more ownership of their responsibility to oversee education of students for the ministry—especially those looking towards the examination for certification for ordination.

Beyond the matter of training, it was felt that the church needs to encourage candidates who are more adaptive and entrepreneurial. We need to accept the risk that is associated with this, because one of the realities of entrepreneurs is how frequently they fail. As well, once they are in the field, the church needs to provide support so that they do not burn out or leave the ministry. ■

Rev. Gordon Haynes is former associate secretary of Canada Ministries at the national offices. He retired in 2012, and attends St. David's, Kelowna, B.C.

Graduates 2013

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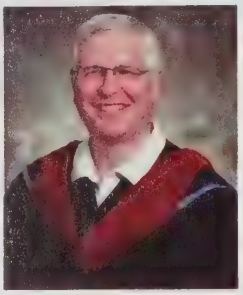
Master of Divinity and Diploma of the College

Jonathan Baird
St. Andrew's, Lakefield, Ont.

Tobey Boyer
St. Andrew's, Barrie, Ont.



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Valetta, Tilbury, Ont.

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St. Columba, Belleville, Ont.

Soo-Yeon Choi
St. Timothy, Etobicoke, Ont.

Darrell Clarke
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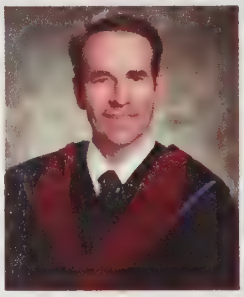

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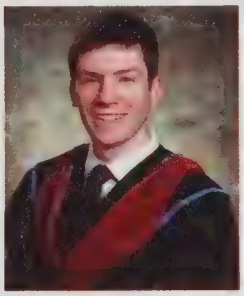
Knox, Listowel, Ont.



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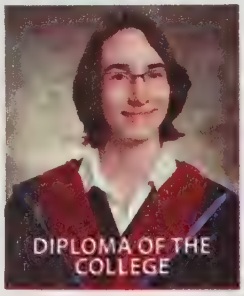

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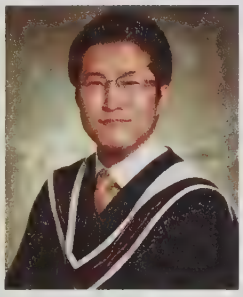
Master of Theology

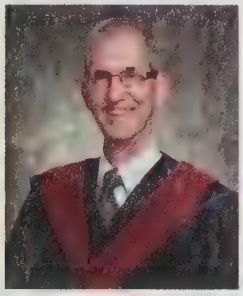
Helen Cheung
Rosewood Baptist, Scarborough, Ont.



Jin Woo Lee
St. Andrew's, Scarborough, Ont.

Lisa Vander Leek
Little Trinity Anglican, Toronto

Doctor of Ministry



Mark Ward
Knox, Dunnville, Ont.

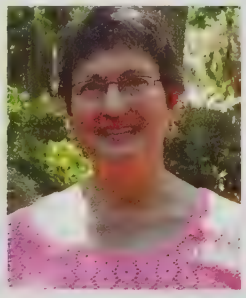
St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver School of Theology

Master of Divinity

Dennis Howard
Haney, Maple Ridge, B.C.

Peter Rombeek
St. Andrew's, Ottawa

Master of Arts in Theological Studies



Lisa Wittman
PC(USA)

The Presbyterian College, Montreal

Special General Assembly Certificate

Erik Wayne Kraglund
Grace, Saint John, N.B.

People & Places

To make People & Places submissions, email: **peopleplaces@presbyterianrecord.ca**

St. Andrew's, Swinton Park, Ont.
Despite the cold and wind, members are all smiles as they gather to celebrate their church's 130th anniversary. After the October service, they enjoyed a potluck meal and fellowship.

First, Stellarton, N.S.
Last year, Sunday school students encouraged the congregation to contribute to a Christmas gift campaign run by the Salvation Army. Members chose tags from trees located in the back of the sanctuary, which gave them an idea of what kind of present a local youngster would appreciate. On the first Sunday in Advent the gifts were presented to an Army officer. Here, Madison Holmes picks one of the tags off a tree.

Briarwood, Beaconsfield, Que.
Anticipating Earth Day, this congregation organized "Bike to Church Sunday." Members on the way to worship biked, carpooled, or took public transportation. Pictured here are many of the participants.

St. Giles, North Sydney, N.S.

St. Giles has hosted an inter-denominational men's breakfast for Cape Bretoners since the mid-60s. Pictured here are the men who attended a breakfast just prior to the church's Good Friday service.

Rodd Charlottetown Hotel, Charlottetown

Last June, at a dinner held at the Rodd Charlottetown Hotel, presbytery honoured retired Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Diaconal Ministers for their years of service and continued support to the PCC. Pictured from left: Rev. Barbara Wright-MacKenzie, Rev. Dr. John Cameron, Mrs. Anne Cameron, Mrs. Magda Auret, Rev. Dr. Adrian Auret, Mrs. Jean Farris, Rev. Dr. James Farris, Rev. Dr. Gordon Matheson, Mrs. Azalia Matheson, Mrs. Janet Glass, Rev. Ian Glass, Mrs. Margaret Scott and Rev. Bill Scott.

St. Andrew's, Ottawa

Last year, three members participated in a PCC-sponsored tour to Palestine and Israel. While there, they visited the Olive Tree Campaign, a peace initiative that has planted more than 80,000 olive trees—a local symbol of hope and prosperity—in areas disturbed by both construction of the West Bank barrier and the activities of Israel's military forces. Upon their return, the church raised enough money to plant a grove of over 80 olive trees. Pictured here are campaign volunteers Laura Smith, Jeanie Hicks and Judy Dodds.

ONLINE EXTRA

ON OUR WEBSITE:
Sarnia, Ont., welcomes new members; multiple baptisms in Stellarton, N.S.; and a chili bake-off in Cobourg, Ont.

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Ministry Opportunities

SYNOD OF THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Merigomish, St. Paul's and Westville, N.S., St. Andrew's; Two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Iona MacLean, 17 Prince St., PO Box 1840, Pictou, NS B0K 1H0; 902-485-4298; ionamac@eastlink.ca.

Tabusintac, N.B., St. John's; New Jersey, Zion and Bartibog, St. Matthew's; Full-time three point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Derek Krunys, 206 Wellington St., Miramichi, NB E1N 1M7; dkrunys@hotmail.com.

Truro, N.S.; St. James and St. Paul's; Full-time minister for two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Michael Koslowski, 2-75 Altavista Lane, Halifax, NS B3N 0A1; 902-402-6747; michaelkoslowski@eastlink.ca.

SYNOD OF QUEBEC AND EASTERN ONTARIO

Arnprior, Ont., St. Andrew's; Full-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Seung Kim, 24 Ethel St., Petawawa, ON K8H 2C1; 613-687-2463; seung37@hotmail.com.

Richmond, Ont., St. Andrew's; Full-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Kelly Graham, 5533 Dickinson St., Manotick, ON K4M 1A6; 613-692-4228; revkgraham@gmail.com.

SYNOD OF CENTRAL, NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO AND BERMUDA

Ajax, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Lois Whitwell, 445 Beverly St., Oshawa, ON L1G 1P9; 905-579-8255; loiswhitwell@rogers.com.

Aurora, St. Andrew's; Part-time (five hours) music director (organist and choir director); for information regarding St. Andrew's and the job description see website standrewspresbyterian.com/index.cfm; Pastor Dennis Wright, c/o Worship Ministry Team, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 32 Mosley St., Aurora, ON L4G 1G9.

Kapuskasing, St. John's Presbyterian and Kapuskasing United; Full-time minister for the new Ecumenical Shared Ministry; Interim Moderator Rev. Arlene Onuoha, 113 Preston St., Timmins, ON P4N 3N1; 705-264-1051; arleneonuoha@hotmail.com and Pastoral Charge Supervisor Rev. Dale Young, 226-A Dixon St., Porcupine, ON P0N 1C0; 705-235-0855; northerndaisy942.dy@gmail.com.

Kingston, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Karen Bach; 613-929-3693; karen.bach@utoronto.ca.

Kitchener, Calvin; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. J. Mark Lewis, 54 Queen St. N., Kitchener, ON N2H 2H2; 519-578-4430; revmarklewis@gmail.com.

Kitchener, Doon; Interim Moderator Rev. Kees Vandermey; 519-698-0300; rmvandermey@gmail.com.

Markham, Markham Chinese; Full-time associate minister for English-speaking ministry; Interim Moderator Rev. Sam Priestley, 19 Elm Lea St., Markham, ON L3P 3M8; 905-294-1633; sam.priestley@bell.net.

Mount Forest, St. Andrew's and Conn, Knox; Interim Moderator Rev. Andrew Apack Song, 51 Church St., Elora, ON N0B 1S0; 519-846-0680 (church) or 519-846-8028 (home); andrewapack@gmail.com.

Nottawa, Emmanuel; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Heather Malnick, 206 Murphy Rd., Baxter, ON L0M 1B1; 705-424-0779; livingfaithbaxter@gmail.com.

Oro, Trinity Community; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Jim Sitler, 1003 Cherish Creek Lane, RR 3, Bracebridge, ON P1L 1X1; 705-645-5650; cherishcreek@sympatico.ca.

Oshawa, Knox; Interim Moderator Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith, c/o Burns Presbyterian Church, 765 Myrtle Rd. W., Ashburn, ON L0B 1A0; 905-925-6346; jeremy@burnschurch.org.

Whitby, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Alexander Wilson, 17 Colonial Ave., Scarborough, ON M2M 2C3; 416-431-0841 (church) or 647-501-0632 (cell); st.stephens.scarborough@gmail.com.

SYNOD OF SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

Bayfield, Knox; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. John Henderson, PO Box 824, Exeter, ON N0M 1S6; 519-235-2608; henderson.johncharles@gmail.com.

Brantford, Alexandra; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Chris Little, 64 Blandford St., PO Box 99, Innerkip, ON N0J 1M0; 519-469-3904; clittle@execulink.com.

Burlington, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Robert Docherty, c/o Knox Presbyterian Church, 461 Elizabeth St., Burlington, ON L7R 4B1; 905-333-3013; revbob.docherty@gmail.com.

Dundas, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Tom Billard, 1901 8th Concession W., RR 1, Cambridge, ON N1R 5S2; 519-621-3023; tcbillard@rogers.com.

Fingal, Knox; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Kevin Steeper; 519-438-3492; ksteeper@elmwoodchurch.ca.

Lucknow and South Kinloss; full time; Interim Moderator Mark Davidson, 519-924-1537; m.mark.davidson@hotmail.com

Sarnia, Laurel Lea-St. Matthew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Harvey Osborne, PO Box 1878, Petrolia, ON N0N 1R0; hosborne77@gmail.com.

Stoney Creek, Heritage Green; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Charmain Sebestyen; csebesyten@shaw.ca.

Windsor, University Community Church; beginning July 1, 2013; Interim Moderator Rev. Wendy Paterson; paulinmemorial@on.aibn.com.

SYNOD OF MANITOBA AND NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

Brandon, Man., St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Dong-Ha Kim, 35 Aurora Cres., Brandon, MB R7B 4G4; 204-727-5874; donghafpc@mymts.net.

Thunder Bay, Ont., First; Minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bert Vancook, First Presbyterian Church, 639 Grey St., Thunder Bay, ON P7E 2E4; 807-623-0717; first@tbaytel.net.

Thunder Bay, Ont., St. Andrew's; Full time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Harold Hunt; revhunt@me.com.

SYNOD OF SASKATCHEWAN

No vacancies at this time.

SYNOD OF ALBERTA AND THE NORTHWEST

Edmonton, Mill Woods; as of Sept. 1; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Jean Bryden; 59-10453 20 Ave. NW, Edmonton, AB T6J 5H1; 780-756-6320; jebryden@gmail.com.

SYNOD OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Comox Valley, Comox Valley; Interim Moderator Rev. John Green, 579 Grayson Rd., Campbell River, BC V9W 6K3; revjohngreen@gmail.com.

Cranbrook, Knox; Senior pastor; Co-interim moderator Rev. Doug Johns; 117 Norton Ave., Kimberley BC V1A 1X8; 250-432-9531, revdjohns@hotmail.com.

Langley, Langley; Half-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Glen Davis; 604-565-7572; gjidavis@telus.net. ■

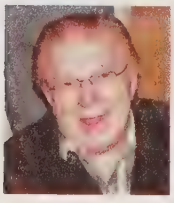
Obituaries

Henderson, Rev. Charles David. After faithfully serving God and His Church for a lifetime, Charles passed away peacefully on January 19, 2013 in London, Ont., at the age of 94 years. Charles was the beloved husband of Anne Marie, father of Brad, Katie and Rebecca (Greg) and grandpa to Julia. Ethel, his first wife predeceased him in 1992.

During his ministry, Charles served congregations in P.E.I., in Appin, Melbourne and Listowel, Ont. He served St. Giles in St. Catharines, Ont., for 26 years. Charles helped start new churches in St. Catharines and Fonthill, Ont. He was also instrumental in starting Oakridge and St. Lawrence churches in London. Charles served on the Camp Kintail committee in southern Ontario, as moderator of the Presbytery of London and moderator of the Synod of Southwestern Ontario. For three and a half years after his retirement, Charles served in Listowel as assistant to the minister. While attending Caven Church in Exeter, Ont., he was given a life membership to the Women's Missionary Society for his extensive pastoral care.

Charles generously supported churches he had been associated with during his ministry. The folks at Scottlea in St. Catharines are especially grateful for his part in helping establish that congregation decades ago and have named their new fellowship hall after him. Charles remained an elder at Scottlea until his death. Charles prayed unceasingly for the Church. Charles was also a longtime board member of the Canadian Bible Society. God bless the work of his hands and now receive the eternal praises of this faithful servant before His heavenly throne.

Matthew 25:21: "Well done, good and faithful servant."



Stewart, Hugh Ralph, August 7, 1929-March 4, 2013. Elder emeritus, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Kemptville, Ont. A Celebration of Life service was held at St. Paul's on March 8, 2013.

Hugh leaves behind a legacy of the memory of his warmth, his sharing of time and his caring of people. He was an active member of his community and belonged to many organizations. He will be greatly missed by his friends in the Kemptville Players, the Probus Club and Friends of the Library.

Hugh greeted hundreds of families and visitors into our church with genuine interest and affection. He also related to our youth in such a natural way that none ever thought of him as "old." His shared expertise and constant learning with young horticulturists and in the local Kemptville Horticultural Society was time well remembered and appreciated by so many now grown.

With grace, dignity and joy Hugh Stewart taught our school classes, was appointed assistant superintendent in 1964, was an elected session elder since 1965 and accepted the appointment of school superintendent from 1971 to 1980. For many years, Hugh also represented us within the presbytery as representative elder. He was the one who recommended we form a committee to celebrate the 150th anniversary of St. Paul's and, of course, he was an active executive member of that committee—plus he was always one of the first people we met during any church function.

He loved to paint, act, sing and tell stories with the eloquence that only he could. Hugh knew many, many people from all walks of life. A lifetime career in the civil service presented many opportunities for him, but more importantly he allowed so many hundreds of people to know him—his heart was always open. Hugh loved to travel, and travel he did. Some examples are his trip to the Holy Land and when he returned from Eastern Europe during our millennium. He delivered a very descriptive and informative presentation about the Presbyterian work being done there. Recently, his travels by train across Canada with his niece, Lori, brought great joy to his later life. His musical talent and singing voice was such a lifetime gift to our choir. Ever since he was an active little boy, Hugh loved to perform. In those days and since, he was also a true character and actor in church presentations; he was a true ambassador for our church and in our community.

Hugh spoke with great love, pride and appreciation of his family. Son of the late Gerald and Jessie (Gardner) and predeceased by younger brother Ron, Hugh was a dear uncle to Lori (Phil) and Ron (Angela) and great uncle of Connor, Jamie and Jessica. He will be missed.

Witt, Ronald George, October 23, 1935-March 1, 2013. Ron graduated from Knox College, Toronto, and was ordained in his home church, St. Andrew's, Calgary, in 1959. His first congregation was in Flin Flon, Man., for five years, followed by his work in Port Arthur and Current River, Ont. In 1968, he joined the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs as a community development worker and later Veterans Affairs as the regional director general, Atlantic region.

He is lovingly remembered and greatly missed by his wife Ruth (Peddie), sons Paul (Shareen), Mark (Marilyn) and daughters Dawn (Derek), Tanis and Colleen; brother Terry (April), sister Lynne (Dave), brother-in-law Don (Lyn) and sister-in-law Mavis; blessed grandfather to Taisto, Luke, Alyshia, Sara, Tyler, Jenni, Trevor (Michelle/great grandfather to Bo), Bradley, Cole, Kelson and Liam; nieces, nephews and friends from across Canada, "sea to sea to shining sea."

Ron spent his leisure time with his wife celebrating nature and enjoying all that Canada's wilderness has to offer. Ron was an avid and passionate rock hunter, a hobby that took him and Ruth on many wonderful adventures around the world.

A celebration of Ron's life was held at Laurel Lea-St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church, Sarnia Ont., on March 5, 2013. As Ron always valued the work done by PWS&D, it is requested that donations in Ron's memory be directed to this great work. ■

Union with Christ

BEFORE. BEHIND. BENEATH. IN OUR HEARTS. **BY JOHN VISSERS**

I began this column in the *Record* last summer with an unapologetic affirmation of the centrality of Jesus Christ for our church's faith and life, now and in the future. My last word is the same. In Jesus Christ, God is for us and with us, doing what we cannot do for ourselves, guiding us to freedom, giving us life.

In this final column I want to emphasize one more thing about our faith in Jesus Christ. God is not only for us and with us in Christ, but God sends the Holy Spirit so that Christ is in us and we are in Christ. This is perhaps the deepest spiritual truth of the Christian life.

It is also central to our tradition as Presbyterian Christians. Contrary to what most people think, the heart of John Calvin's theology is not predestination, it is union with Christ.

"We must understand," says Calvin, "that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value to us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us."

That's what the Holy Spirit does. The Spirit gives us faith. Faith binds us to Christ and makes us one with Christ. Followers of Jesus are in Christ: Christ is in them.

That's why I love Paul's language in the New Testament. Hundreds of times he uses the little phrase "in Christ." Those who are in Christ are new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). Christ in us is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Spiritual union with Christ and participation in the life of the triune God is what makes the Christian life a powerful and often mysterious experience of the divine.

> My prayer is that the Presbyterian Church in Canada will be sustained by this wider work of God, and will, whatever the future holds, continue to bear witness to its union with Jesus Christ

St. Patrick's well-known "Breastplate" prayer emphasizes the same thing: "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me."

Admittedly, the cause of Christ, or at least the church of Christ, seems to be faltering in Europe and North America. That discourages us. However, churches in Africa, Asia and South America are on the rise. As reported in the January *Record*, my wife Lynn and I recently visited Ghana and Malawi and experienced the lively work of God going on in the global south. Presbyterian churches in those countries are flourishing numerically and spiritually: they are alive in Christ.

My prayer is that the Presbyterian Church in Canada will be sustained by this wider work of God, and will, whatever the future holds, continue to bear witness to its union with Jesus Christ. Christ is the church's head, and in Christ is life. ■

Rev. Dr. John Vissers is director of academic programs and professor of historical theology at Knox College, Toronto.

Communion of Saints

WALKING THROUGH HISTORY IN AVENCHES, SWITZERLAND. **BY CONNIE WARDLE**

From July 6 to 22, 2012, Connie Wardle participated in a pilgrimage through countries touched by the Protestant Reformation—France, Switzerland and Scotland. This is the sixth of a series of reflections on the journey.

I sat in a quiet village in Switzerland in the footprint of a lost city. Beyond the fields, I could just make out the line of ruined walls that once encircled the capital of Rome's Swiss province. The city of Aventicum was probably born around the time of Christ and it grew into a bustling place, home to about 20,000 people.

Today, in its place stands the village of Avenches, home to about 3,500.

I wondered what it must be like to live surrounded by such history. Ruins of Roman baths, a theatre and a temple stand in the fields on the outskirts of town, and in the museum one can visit some of the artifacts that have been recovered. More must be hidden beneath the earth and paving stones. And much must exist now only in the speculation of scholars and the imaginations of visitors.

Perhaps for local people who live surrounded by these reminders of this city—which rose and dwindled away again long before the first Europeans set foot in North America—the place has lost its enchantment. Perhaps it has become routine.

Yet for someone like me who was just passing through, walking by those ruins brought history very close. I imagined time as a heavy curtain that hung between me and this place and its people in Roman times. As if I could pull it back and catch a glimpse of them.

The feeling stayed with me as our little band of pilgrims visited a modest Reformed church, which still goes by the name it carried before the Reformation: Sainte Marie-Madeleine.

The building itself has evolved through the ages. The oldest surviving section dates from the 11th century, yet it has modern stained glass windows created by Brother Eric of Taize. A mural from the 13th century adorns one wall. The sanctuary was expanded in the 15th century and renovated in the 18th.

Yet for someone like me who was just passing through, walking by those ruins brought history very close

In the old chapel, it was easy to imagine standing shoulder to shoulder with past pilgrims, with only the heavy curtain of time between us. So often I have said the words of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the holy catholic church, the communion of saints..." But so rarely had I thought about being a member of that church or that communion. I hadn't considered what it might mean.

There are generations and generations of Christians who have gone before me. Some of them are the well-known men and women whose lives and theologies are studied in seminaries. Others lived their faith quietly and humbly and then faded out of history. Even if I can never know their names, even if all physical evidence of them is gone, they are as much a part of Christ's church as I am. It's a wonderful thought.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen." ■

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s staff writer.*

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PRESBYTERIAN RECORD

continued from page 50

Is being single a gift of God, just as much as being married is a gift of God; and both institutions a gift to the community of faith?

as Addy. He had his body low in the water and his neck fully outstretched, coming on like a destroyer on a sub-hunting mission. He was making a noise that was part hiss and part roar. He bore down on Addy tangentially. Addy was so focused on the goslings in her sights that she didn't even know he was coming. It was looking pretty obvious who the casualty was about to be. A full-grown male Greater Canada Goose can seriously hurt a dog in the water.

All my hollering and dancing up and down on the shore finally got Addy to look back. That's when she saw Albert. His extremely aggressive approach so unnerved her that she turned and raced for the shore. Albert continued in hot pursuit. I was picking up boulders to enter into the fray as they both approached the beach. But old Albert was no fool. Once he was sure that Addy had changed her mind, he returned to the gaggle of goslings and their parents, honking and wagging his tail, obviously quite satisfied with himself.

Uncle Albert has been returning to our end of the lake each spring for almost as long as we have lived here. He is a solitary bird, never with a mate, always satisfied to be the protective uncle to the flock of goslings reared by another pair. Perhaps he is a widowed bird; Canada Geese are said to mate for life. Perhaps he just likes to be solitary. Whatever the case, one thing is for sure and we have seen this exhibited time and time again over the years: Albert plays a huge role in the Canada Goose community that he has identified with. This day, the role he played was that of protector extraordinaire. Tomorrow it may be flock lookout or gosling babysitter or adult companion; I've seen him play them all.

Whenever I think of Uncle Albert I think of the exceptional value of single people in a society and within a community like the church. The Apostle wrote to the Corinthians: Sometimes I wish everyone were single like me—a simpler life in many ways! But celibacy is not for everyone any more than marriage is. God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of the married life to others. I do, though, tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me (1 Corinthians 7:7-8, *The Message*).

Much has been made of these words but for me they have always been about the equal value of the married person and the single person within the community of faith. And yet, there seems to me to be a stigma within faith communities and especially within the hearts of some single folk that I know, that being single somehow makes them of less value within society in general and within the faith community specifically. I would go so far as to say that there is even a tragic false perception that being single is abnormal. Even the likes of so-called progressive New Age neo-Gnostic fads exhibited in the likes of recent popular books like *The Da Vinci Code* seem based on the premise that being single is so abnormal that Jesus couldn't possible have been so. Some people I deeply respect and love as Christian siblings literally pine away for a mate, partly because of loneliness, which I empathize with, and partly because of the perception that being single is somehow abnormal and that life is of less value because of it. My best friend Jim, now passed away, struggled with this most of his adult life. I used to ache for him, not because he wasn't married but because of the struggle he had in remaining single, which was his choice and gift. He was the original "Uncle Albert" in our lives, and not just us but for a number of families that he related to in his community.

Is Paul right? Is being single a gift of God, just as much as being married is a gift of God; and both institutions a gift to the community of faith? Every time I stand before a congregation and speak words in the marriage litany expounding that marriage is a gift of God, I feel like I need to say, "and so is being single." In fact, as of this wedding month of June, I resolve to do just that.

I really feel that we as a church need to take this up, to begin to become proactive with regards to exploring and promoting the value of singleness and its companion, celibacy. I am not thinking of this with any moral agenda, which there may well be, but more from the perspective of value and spirituality. As a preacher, when was the last time I proclaimed a sermon on a text like 1 Corinthians 7:7-8 with a mind to speak into this? As a counsellor, when was the last time I met with single people in my faith circle to explore this institution as a gift of God? As a spiritual director, when was the last time I explored the spiritual possibilities of remaining single and celibate? Uncle Albert has revealed to me I have a lot yet to learn and even more to do. ■

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of several books.

A Lesson from Uncle Albert

BEING SINGLE IS A GIFT FROM GOD.

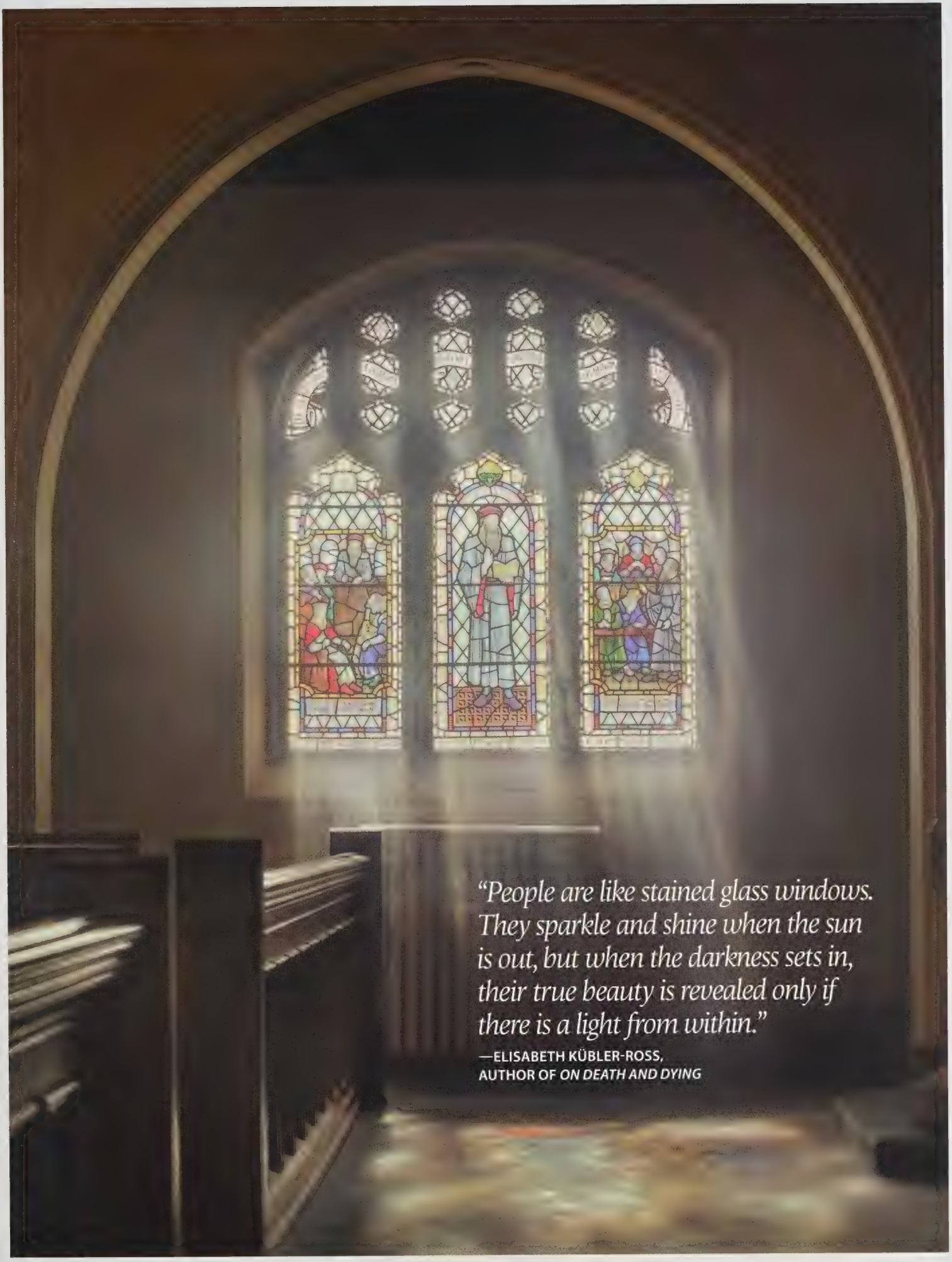
BY DAVID WEBBER ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY FALLS

"Addy! Get back here," I screamed. But it was too late. She had already been incensed. Every Labrador/Chesapeake Bay Retriever gene in her body had been yanked. A pair of Canada Geese with eight goslings strung out between them had decided to come in and sample the lakeside salad bar, which is the dandelion field that passes as our lawn. Addy had been watching them from her perch in the rec room window and when I opened the door she was out like a shot, a yellow streak roaring down the dandelion runway and launching herself through the air and into the lake like a torpedo. There was no doubt in the world that there were going to be serious causalities.

The two adult geese set up a racket of shrieking and honking as they desperately tried to herd their newborn flock out of the way. Addy was bearing down on the goslings like death on a mission. She was swimming so strong and fast that her body seemed to come out of the water with each stroke. And then, out of the corner of my eye, a third entity came into the picture. It was Uncle Albert. That's when I really began to holler.

Uncle Albert, an exceptionally large and senior Greater Canada Goose, was swimming easily as fast

continued on page 49



"People are like stained glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within."

—ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS,
AUTHOR OF *ON DEATH AND DYING*

"Churches need to become better evidence for God in our society."

– Gordon Haynes, page 36

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JULY/AUGUST 2013

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Yesterday, was, in a way, our day.
But together we acknowledge
that today belongs to you.
Holy Spirit, nudge us forward for
our journey is up and not down.
Jesus, constitute us now a court
of your church. Amen."

—REV. DR. DAVID SUTHERLAND,
AN OPENING PRAYER AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PRESBYTERIAN RECORD

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Image by iStock photo

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Incarnate, Visible Communities

CONGREGATIONS ARE WHERE GOD'S KINGDOM TOUCHES THE GROUND. **BY CLYDE ERVINE**

Here's what I long for in our denomination: that we fall in love with, and give ourselves to, the building and renewing of congregations as vital, necessary, communities of disciples that pulsate with God's grace, such that the world can see in them visible, tangible, demonstrations of God's transforming power. That's what I think congregations are for!

Let me step back a little and acknowledge that in the rarified, intellectual circles of leading continental theologians, congregational renewal has not been a hot topic. Indeed well into the 20th-century, a great number of theologians ignored ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church. As for congregations, they belonged in some theological twilight zone.

Whether we like it or not, something of this theological tradition has affected us all, with the result that many still think of Jesus' kingdom as an exciting possibility, but something that's not linked to the ordinary life of our congregations. Not to worry. Up until the 1960s, at least, most of us knew that congregations were just fine, offering a chaplaincy ministry that celebrated the batching, matching and dispatching of our family and friends. But then came the cracking and then the crumbling of Christendom, leaving mainline congregations like ours reeling, and I suggest, at the mercy of an army of fearless new congregational gurus who said they knew how to put the congregational humpty-dumptys back together again. It has not worked for the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Many still think of Jesus' kingdom as an exciting possibility, but something that's not linked to the ordinary life of our congregations

So, to my enduring concern: Congregations, are they necessary; if so, what are they for and can they be renewed? Theologians haven't spent a lot of ink giving us answers to these questions. Until recently. One theologian who has best reconnected Jesus' kingdom teaching to the church, and to local congregations, is Lesslie Newbigin. In his theology, God's kingdom or reign, inaugurated by Jesus, though not yet present in its full coming glory, touches the ground right now, in incarnate, visible communities called congregations. In God's kingdom strategy, congregations matter!

Let me close with some words from Newbigin:

"The ... danger to be avoided is the separation of the Kingdom from the church. It is clear that they cannot and must not be confused ... [nor] identified. But they must also not be separated. From the beginning the announcement of the Kingdom led to a summons to follow and so to the formation of a community ... which has begun to taste [even to foretaste] the reality of the Kingdom."

Right now in our beloved Presbyterian Church we need to know that congregations matter and to know the place that congregations have in God's mission. Newbigin offers a way to grasp what congregations are for, and provides a firm theological ground on which to build and renew them. ■

Rev. Dr. Clyde Ervine is minister at Central, Hamilton, Ont. This is an excerpt from a talk he gave at the 139th General Assembly in Toronto in June.

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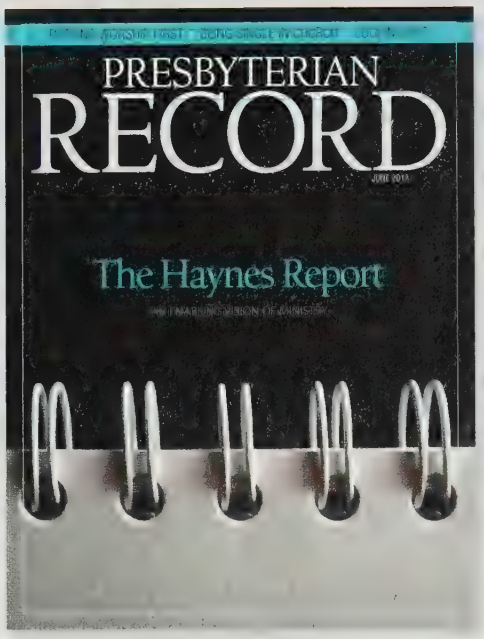

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Kudos, and Some Suggestions

Re The Haynes Report, June

Well done! I had read Gordon's report last fall, thought it was good, (I even cited it several times in a doctoral dissertation I was writing at the time) perhaps even prophetic in its encouragement for our future ministry. The article was excellent in its summation and insightful, not to mention its potential to catalyze the idea put forth by its subtitle. The graphics were also excellent, adding much to the content.

RODGER MCEACHERN, EDMONTON

I have read the Haynes Report in the June *Record* and commend Gordon Haynes and any who helped him for the incredible amount of research and work that has gone into the report.

However, I would like to share my concern about two omissions with reference to the congregation I am currently attending, Knox in Oakville, Ont. Yes, we have fewer members, fewer children in the church school, and lower weekly attendance, but the congregation is thriving in some specific areas, mainly worship and preaching, and education. These areas are historically very important in Presbyterian churches but I do not see any mention of them in the Haynes Report. Yes, theological education is mentioned, but the emphasis is on "practical training," not on a clergy deeply immersed in the scriptures as they are being understood today, and theologies that seek to deal with innovative, contemporary ways of understanding faith.

Over the years I have had a number of conversations with people who used to attend church but no longer do and never has anyone complained about the main concerns of the report. What people have said to me is that they can no longer say a creed that was written in the fourth century. They are no longer satisfied with a literal interpretation of the Bible. They want to look at their faith in light of what we know today from the sciences and through their own life experiences. They are searching for different ways to understand ➤

God and how Jesus understood himself and his ministry over 2,000 years ago. What we really need is content that meets the deepest spiritual longings of people of all ages in the historic era in which we live.

HELEN GOGGIN, OAKVILLE, ONT.

Another Perspective on Singleness

Re Standing Alone in the Church, June

It appears that Cheryl Bradbee has insulated herself to keep "love" out of her life. "One should endeavour to be happy themselves and communicate that happiness to others." I am sure Paul would agree. It is not a matter of being accepted or rejected as single; rather, it is necessary to allow one's self to love another.

GERALD MORGAN, ONLINE COMMENT

My heart goes out to Cheryl Bradbee. At times I feel very lonely in the middle of a crowd because I am not currently part of a couple or involved in bringing up a family. And at the times when I feel most lonely, it seems that everywhere I turn the world is paired off. However, my experience at church with my congregational family has been a very positive one and a source of support, comfort and empowerment. Yes, our church is extremely family-oriented and there are very few of us who are single in our 50s, yet we are never excluded or intentionally made to feel less than. On the contrary, we are encouraged to share our unique gifts and appreciated for who we are as individuals and what we bring to the table. We are always included and as we gather as a community we do so as individuals, some who are in relationships and some who are not, but the focus is on celebrating each of us as a unique child of God. I started attending our church a little over five years ago and became an official member in the fall of 2009—honestly, one of the best decisions I have ever made!

CINDY MORNEAULT, MONTREAL

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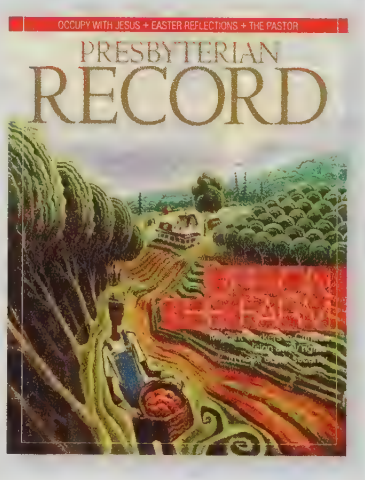

Some Thoughts on Islam

Re Be Aware, Letters, June

Thank you once again to Harris Athanasiadis for enabling us to keep our minds open to Islam and to those whose faith is unfamiliar to us. If we believe that Christ was accepting of those of all religions, nationalities, and both men and women, surely the least we can do is follow his example. God is at work in all of us, and not exclusively in Presbyterians or in Christians, and it behooves us to recognise this and accept the other as we would like to be accepted.

LIZ CAMPBELL, ONLINE COMMENT

Re A Plea to the West, News, June

I could hardly believe my eyes when reading this article written by two Muslims. Things like how they appreciate living in Canada where they feel accepted and hardly encounter any hostility, and the wrongs of *jihad*, terrorism, Islamism, tribal terror between the two major sects of Islam, etc.

They also say that political correctness in the mainstream media, educational institutions and civil society associations give cover to Islamists.

I am keeping this story for future reference—it is something we should all read.

RALPH FORSHAW, NANAIMO, B.C.

Many thanks indeed for the informative article. It's a great pity that such material is not widely promulgated by the secular news media.

R.M. STRANG, SURREY, B.C.

Thanks for Sharing

Re Only Heaven Is Far, June

Our former minister, Rev. Mark Hoogsteen, went on a mission trip to Malawi in 2009. On his return he shared his experiences with us at Knox, Burlington, Ont. It was obvious that Mark's heart had been touched by the people he met in Malawi.

Shortly after Mark's return, he died due to heart problems. Mark's ministry with us was short but he left a real impact.

Thank you for sharing Malawi with us here in Canada. For our quilt group it holds special meaning. God bless.

MARY MCGIBBON, ONLINE COMMENT

Correction:

The image that accompanies June's Progressive Lectionary column was poorly matched. As noted by Rev. Laurence DeWolfe, the painting "is of the wrong Mary, illustrating the wrong story from the wrong gospel. The story of Mary of Bethany anointing Jesus is from John. It is, however, often conflated with this text, and one Mary is mistaken for the other. But, as I have taken pains to point out, Mary Magdalene did not anoint Jesus." We apologize for the error. ■

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Place Yourself

EVERYTHING IS PROCESS. **BY ANDREW FAIZ**

Rosa Parks didn't just happen to sit on that bus that day. Joseph McNeil, Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair, Jr. and David Richmond didn't just happen at the Woolworth's counter in Greensboro one day. These two actions came at the end of a very long process of networking, strategizing, planning, fundraising and much else. Popular history may remember these five as starting a protest but that was just the next phase. Nothing just happens; everything is process.

This has filled my thoughts in the weeks after General Assembly. There has been a lot of despondent chatter, in the same vein as the past few years: A need for leadership, which will provide a financial commitment towards healthy congregations. That's probably it in a nutshell; there are other points on each individual's personal wish list.

The despondency began before assembly started when one look at the proposed agenda suggested the court was only going to shuffle the furniture. Another shot at biennial assemblies was considered the hottest topic. The singular reason for skipping years is financial and I didn't sense (again) commissioners thought that compelling enough to give up on the community and culture of an annual gathering. It was sent down for further discussion. Again.

There were other overtures as well, for example on the use of elders and retired ministers in different ways in presbyteries, which were good ideas but not core concepts. There were presentations of good news stories from several congregations, which were warmly received, but added further to the frustration because the offices of our church are not seen as bringing enough funding, education and other resources to all congregations and presbyteries.

Think it out; raise it at presbytery; move it to the venerable assembly

That is a core issue: the Haynes Report (published in our June issue) calls for concentrated efforts in providing resources to congregations and presbyteries. That is the thing, I sensed, many wanted to hear from the 139th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

This is where Rosa Parks and those four young men at the lunch counter come to mind. There is leadership in our church: It comes from the local churches, from the pews and pulpits, from the sessions. That's where it starts. If as a local congregation you believe you need some guidance to better help you reach your own potentials, then discuss that amongst yourselves. Take the conversation to a neighbouring congregation. Think it out; raise it at presbytery; move it to the venerable assembly. Place yourselves on the committees of the Life and Mission Agency; come at it that way. There are many options.

Our polity, our system, is a process. So, next year in Waterloo, or the year after on Vancouver Island, we can have these needed conversations.

I could pull my notes and pile on the evidence, but I present again the discussion around biennial assemblies. The mood of the court, year after year after year, is not that fussed about money. It worries about money, of course; we all do. But from this one example, we glean it is also interested in the community of the church. Assembly is a great opportunity to meet others from across the country. There is more to assembly than business; more to the church than money. For many lay commissioners it is a transformative experience. Community in God's name does that.

I was struggling to put these thoughts together, till I read Rev. Matthew Ruttan's June 10 blog posting: "So often we think the burden is on God to give people signs. But what if it was the other way around? Why is God the one with something to prove? Instead of us wondering why God isn't dancing around proving Himself to us, why aren't we giving Him signs that we are His? That we are capable of beauty and grace?" ■

Andrew Faiz is the Record*'s managing editor. Rev. Ruttan posts frequently on the* Record*'s website.*

Rev. Peter Bush, minister at Westwood, Winnipeg, speaks at a service constituting the Filipino Presbyterian Church of Winnipeg last May.

PHOTO BY EPHRAIM CAPILLAR

Filipino Presbyterian Opens in Winnipeg

PRESBYTERY SEES A NEED, PLANTS A CHURCH. **BY AMY MACLACHLAN**

THE PRESBYTERY OF WINNIPEG held a special service on May 12 to constitute the Filipino Presbyterian Church of Winnipeg, a congregation of the PCC. The service was held at Calvin, Winnipeg.

Members of the new congregation were joined by members of the presbytery and the local community for a service filled with music led by the praise and worship team, prayers in English and Tagalog, the reaffirmation of faith of the members, and prayers of thanksgiving and healing. A traditional Filipino feast followed the service.

"There were about 200 people there," said Rev. Glenn Ball, regional staff for the Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario. "There was great support from the Filipino community. Many of them have not been there otherwise, so we're looking forward to them becoming part of the community ... [We] hope this is going to be a growing ministry."

Winnipeg's Filipino community is comprised of over 60,000 people, making it larger than the city's First Nations population. It was fitting then, that the Presbytery of Winnipeg saw a need to reach out.

Started on Mother's Day 2009 as the Filipino Mission, this outreach has grown to 68 adults and children. Led by Pastors Ed Capillar and Mario Gundayao, Filipino, Winnipeg, is the first Tagalog speaking congregation in the PCC.

It took about five months to negotiate the arrangement between the Filipino congregation and that of the host church, Calvin. And while there are still kinks to work out, the two groups are already enjoying occasional worship and fellowship together. Worship includes both Tagalog and English, and both contemporary and traditional music. Sunday school teachers are already in place, and elders were ordained on June 16.

"It's been four years of prayer," Ball told the *Record*, thanking everyone who played a role in helping make this church a reality. "Westwood, Winnipeg [has] a heart for mission, and they offer support to congregations that see a need and we are then able to do things like this.

"[And] Without Calvin Church's willingness to open its doors, planting this new faith community would have been much more difficult. We pray that God will continue to prosper and bless these congregations as they seek to minister to a rapidly changing population within the City of Winnipeg." ■ *—with files from Glenn Ball. Amy MacLachlan is the* Record*'s senior writer.*

Community News

Kettle Honoured, Again

AFTER A DISTINGUISHED CAREER AS a Presbyterian padre, Rev. Dr. David Kettle is preparing for a new role as secretary general of the Canadian Agency of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, starting Aug. 1.

"I am both surprised and honoured to take on this challenge most especially since on my watch we will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of WWI and the 75th anniversary of WWII," he told the *Record* in an email.

The Canadian CWGC cares for the North and South American graves or memorials of all commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two world wars. That's about 21,000 war dead in 3,500 cemeteries.

In total, the U.K.-based CWGC cares for almost 1.7 million war dead on six continents. ■ —*CW*

Kairos Goes to the Congo

AN ECUMENICAL DELEGATION LED BY Kairos, a peace and justice organization, headed to the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in June. Peter Lamont, a chief military judge with the Department of Justice, and a member at St. Andrew's, Ottawa, represents the Presbyterian Church.

Delegates met with communities, human rights defenders, civil society organizations, churches, and government representatives to better understand the human rights' situation there, as well as the environmental impact of resource extraction on communities in the eastern DRC.

Lamont told the *Record* he was "looking forward to learning more about the plight of female victims of conflict-related sexual violence in that part of the world." ■ —*AM with files from Kairos*

CFGB Supports Legislation

NEW LEGISLATION THAT WILL GUIDE the amalgamation of the Canadian International Development Agency and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade into the new Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development has the support of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank—an aid agency partnered with the PCC.

The new structure includes a dedicated Deputy Minister for International Development, a provision that will help protect the integrity of the international development and humanitarian assistance program.

Executive Director Jim Cornelius testified at a Parliamentary Standing Committee hearing on the new legislation, where he shared a simple message: "As I travel across this country speaking with thousands of Canadians, a consistent message I hear is that many Canadians care about those living in poverty in developing countries, take personal action to do something about it, and expect Canada as a country to be responding to the needs of the world's most vulnerable people. Canadians believe our aid efforts should be about making a difference for the poor, and that it is not about what's in it for us." The new legislation implements the measures outlined in the 2013 budget and was announced in April. ■ —*CFGB*

Middle East Christians

REV. DR. RICK FEE AND REV. DR. GLYNNIS Williams represented the PCC at a conference to discuss Christian witness in the Middle East, in Lebanon in May.

The conference brought together members of the Middle East Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. In the statement, the church leaders called for churches in the Middle East to "commit to support one another in steadfast prayer" and for the MECC and WCC to work for peace and ecumenical and inter-faith understanding on a number of fronts.

The full statement can be found on the WCC's website, oikoumene.org. ■

Stalwart Member Passes

MARGARET WILLIAMS, retired diaconal minister and member at Parkwood, Ottawa, died on June 9 at the age of 105. A funeral service was held at Parkwood, followed by burial in Nova Scotia. She was born March 22, 1908.

Williams' 100th birthday was recognized by the General Assembly in 2008, along with the 100th anniversary of the Order of Diaconal Ministries. Williams was the longest surviving member of the Order, having been designated a deaconess by the Presbytery of Pictou in 1936. Williams was also a lifetime member of the Women's Missionary Society, having attended meetings since the age of 15.

For a lengthier account of Williams' life and service to the church, written by her minister, Rev. James Hurd, please visit our website. ■ —*AM*

Authors Awarded

REV. LAWRENCE BRICE AND JAYNE SELF, both members of the PCC, made trips to the winner's podium at the annual Word Guild awards.

Brice's *Confident Faith: In a World That Wants To Believe*, took the top prize for Instructional Book and Apologetic/Evangelism.

Self won for Novel/Suspense, with *Death Of A Highland Heavyweight*.

The top prize with a $5,000 purse went to Sheila Wray Gregoire for *The Good Girl's Guide To Great Sex*. ■ —*The Word Guild*

A Mother's Anguish

MISSING WOMEN ARE GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN. **BY VIVIAN KETCHUM**

AS A MOTHER, the faded picture of a missing aboriginal woman bothered me. Each day as I walked to work, the picture of 20-year-old Amber Rose Marie Guiboche was there, fading more and more each day. I couldn't help but think of her mother and her family who might have been the ones to tape the picture to the post. It was not only the torn and faded picture that bothered me, but the mother's anguished loss of her daughter that was most certainly behind it. The not knowing of what happened to her daughter, who disappeared in 2010. My thoughts were of her mother. Thinking of the pain she must be experiencing of not knowing what happened or where her daughter was. The only desire left was to bring her daughter home.

I recently lost a child, but I lost him to a sudden illness and had closure. My emotional wounds have been mending and I have had the privilege of being able to work through my grief. There was the support of friends and family as I dealt with my loss. The funeral service and the burial were all part of the grieving process. A final good-bye to the child I lost all too soon. I have empathy for this mother, whom I have never met, whose grief must still be there. A mother who is seeking closure after her loss.

There are a reported 582 missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada according to the Native Women's Association. That is a lot of mothers seeking closure for their children—children who have gone missing or were murdered. It is the mothers who often spearhead a march or a public awareness campaign to keep their daughters' names in the news. Sadly, the public campaigns generate little media attention and after a few days, people move on to the next story.

A march for missing women happened on Logan Ave. in Winnipeg last May. The area has a high aboriginal population, and is where many women go missing. About 200 people took part in the march, hoping to raise awareness for the hundreds of unsolved missing persons cases in the area.

I thought of how strong this mother must be to rise above the pain and loss to try to bring awareness of her missing daughter to the public. Not only through posters, but by having public marches together with other families who have missing or murdered daughters. She would have to continually expose her grief to strangers in hopes that someone out there knows what happened to her daughter. A mother doing what she can to bring closure to a painful part of her life.

I was shocked when reading a story from Winnipeg of how, allegedly, a suspect told the police he buried a native woman in the local landfill. There was a brief outcry—not over where she is allegedly buried, but about the cost of trying to locate the woman's body. There was an attempt made by the police to try to locate the woman's remains, but sadly it was in vain and they gave up.

Why is this mother's story not being heard? Maybe the question should be, why are her tears being ignored by the public, the government and the police? Why is there not more being done to help these mothers, families and possibly the young children the missing women may have left behind?

I can help one mother by sharing her story and keeping her daughter's story and other women out there in the public view.

Vivian Ketchum is a mother of three. She lives and works in Winnipeg, where she attends the Winnipeg Inner City Missions church. ■

'Feisty' Lois Klempa Remembered

WMS ADVOCATE, AUTHOR AND LEADER. **BY SETH VEENSTRA**

DR. LOIS KLEMPA, celebrated diaconal minister, prominent leader of the Women's Missionary Society and co-author of *Certain Women Amazed Us*, a historical account of the WMS, passed away May 19. She is survived by her husband Rev. Dr. William (Bill) Klempa, moderator of the 124th General Assembly.

Born in North Cobalt, Ont., on Oct. 13, 1932, Lois Stewart was one of nine children. She went on to study at Ewart College, Toronto, graduating in 1958.

"After graduating, she wasn't designated as a deaconess, though, because at that point she and Bill had already gotten married. And being married to Bill is a job itself," said Druse Bryan, a close friend and former WMS president, with a laugh.

'Lois was always her own person. She could be fiesty. She had strong opinions'

"Lois was always her own person. She could be feisty. She had a strong opinion on all sorts of subjects, not just theology. We had some good arguments, but she was also fun to be with. When we travelled to WMS events together the party was always in our room," said Bryan, who came to know Lois in the 1970s while the Klempas lived in Montreal.

"In 1989 she organized a cross-Canada anniversary event. It was a huge success and I credit that to her. She had amazing organizational skills, was very put together, but never stuffy."

In subsequent years, Klempa held many offices and titles within the church. Besides being a prominent WMS leader (which included synodical president and serving on its national executive), she served also on various national boards and committees, including the General Assembly's Committee on History and the Congregational Life Committee.

Amidst all her work, the mother of three was also "a huge family person," said Bryan. "She'd happily rearrange her schedule to make time for her grandkids."

In 1998 Klempa became an international ecumenical delegate. "Bill and Lois had a natural partnership. Their roles blended perfectly," said longtime friend Joyce Morden, who, with her husband John, enjoyed many vacation trips together with the Klempas.

By the late 1990s Lois had already begun collecting pieces of the WMS story, often compiling and distributing leaflets on the society's history. So when the WMS decided to publish an extensive history of the society, Klempa was an obvious choice to spearhead the project. She spent three years on researching and writing before the book was published in 2002.

"Lois really believed in what the WMS did over the many years of history," the book's co-author Rev. Rosemary Doran said. "Especially because, for many years, the WMS was one of the few vehicles available to women who wanted to be involved in the church."

"When Lois received her honorary doctorate from Knox College [in 2004], we all felt honoured," said Bryan.

"We were proud that one of our own was recognized. Not many times do honorary doctorates go to a layperson. She inspired many people." ■

Seth Veenstra is a freelance writer. He attends Central, Hamilton, Ont.

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Faith on Campus

FUNDING THEOLOGY IS IMPORTANT. **BY JASON ZUIDEMA**

WHILE COMMON PERCEPTION holds that post-secondary theological education has shrunk rapidly, Canada's provinces actually continue to provide millions of dollars per year to subsidize directly or indirectly the study of religion and theology. Many professors in the humanities and social sciences spend time considering questions that would once have only occupied theologians. Most public universities in Canada have at least modest religious studies departments, with one or two professors working on issues of concern to the Christian faith, while other schools have world-class professors, research programs, library funds, multiple departments and affiliated schools of religion and theology.

If one were to include together direct and indirect funding, there is no doubt that, as a society, we are still spending a great deal on the study of theology and religion. Consider, for example, the hundreds of thousands of dollars received each year for conferences and publications from the federal and provincial granting agencies—this on top of regular salaries or funding from within the university. Though research is undertaken for a variety of reasons, there is no doubt that much of what is done in these institutions is meant to be useful outside the university.

Two points might help us think about the study of theology in government-accredited 'research' universities. First, the model of secularism in which religion would be erased from our society as the methods and goals of science advanced is less plausible than it once was. Canada continues to be home to myriad religious groups, especially Christian. As Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor notes in his monumental *A Secular Age*, another view of secularism in which faith becomes one option among many, is more descriptive of reality. We are not seeing the end of faith so much as its continued fragmentation. Moreover, various religious traditions, including many Christian denominations, retain pockets of surprising health. And since immigration from countries in which religion still dominates politics continues to be strong, we will no doubt see increasingly the need to negotiate 'reasonable accommodations' for religious minorities. Do we want to leave such negotiation to the rotation of political parties or the courts?

Second, since our society continues to be home to such diverse religious traditions, we need venues to inform and debate. Though Christian theology is properly at home in the Church, it need not only be discussed within the Church or at church-run institutions. Though the work of these institutions is often commendable, it is not always accessible. Paradoxically, it may be theology's very oddness and the offensive scandal that it represents to the present-day, politically correct consensus that make it especially important to the world of scholarship at the university. Seeing that significant resources for deep theological study still exist in Canada, those who might be discouraged should not give up, but seek to participate in conversations in profound and meaningful ways. There is still room for a new generation of scholars to join the many theological discussions that happen in a country whose changing religious population is discovering how to live together. ■

Dr. Jason Zuidema is affiliate assistant professor in the Department of Theological Studies at Concordia University, Montreal, and chair of the organizing committee for a conference this September in Montreal on the relationship between faith and the university since the Reformation. Christianfaithandtheuniversity.ca.

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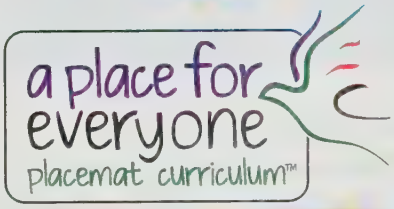

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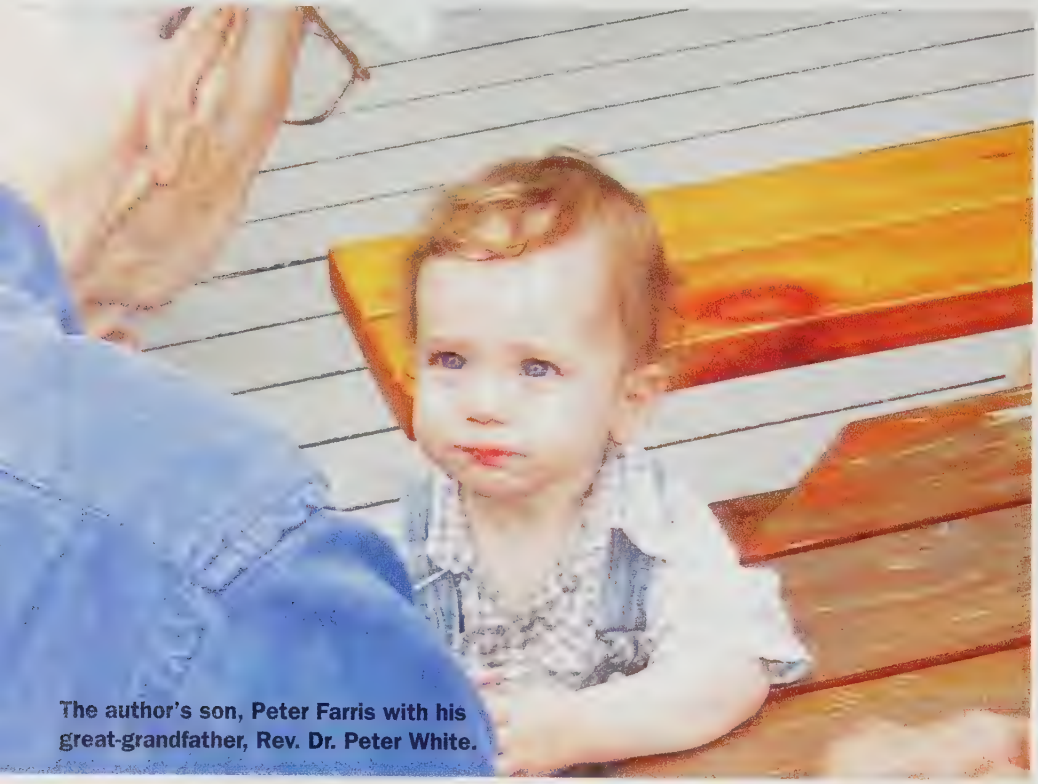
Young and Old Together

NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GENERATIONS. BY JUDITH FARRIS



The author's son, Peter Farris with his great-grandfather, Rev. Dr. Peter White.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JUDITH FARRIS

Praying together, Reta and Peter were sheltered by each other and by their God

A TALE OF TWO COFFEE TIMES

My daughter Anna shrieked and chased her cousin Elijah round the church hall. It is not every Sunday that he comes to our church, Paterson Memorial in Sarnia, Ont., for a visit, and she was thrilled. My brother Matt, with his coffee mug in hand, nodded at his two-year-old daughter Ainsley, who was perched on a table. Virginia, an elderly friend, had boosted the girl up. Ainsley's mop of curls bent toward Virginia's white hair in an earnest tête-à-tête.

"That wouldn't happen in our church," Matt said. "There are loads of kids everywhere, and they run around like crazy during coffee hour, but there isn't space for that kind of thing to happen, a conversation like that."

My brother's church is way cooler than ours. Coffee time at Matt's church is called Connections Café, and it looks like a Starbucks—not a gold-rimmed cup in sight. Don't get me wrong—Matt's church is faithful. The congregation engages with its community, worships the Trinitarian God, makes disciples. When my family visited, friendly volunteers welcomed my daughter to Sunday school and cuddled my son in the nursery. Being cool—and being a large congregation—does not preclude being faithful.

At Matt's church that Sunday, I caught glimpses of God at work through the stories shared by families presenting children for baptism, and in the witness of a young man presenting himself to be baptized. That day, God added to this church's number those who are being saved, including my infant niece. The blessings of God's mission are evident in this green and growing church plant. But Matt's words taught me to see a particular kingdom blessing that can be found at my home church.

GOD'S UPSIDE-DOWN KINGDOM

I recently attended an annual conference for ministers and their spouses at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont. Mark Buchanan shared from his book *Your Church is Too Safe*, telling about his church's often messy journey into local mission. Central to his message is that God calls us out from the comfortable safety of segregation into a difficult discipleship. God's kingdom is evident when people who are unlike each other come together.

Buchanan writes that when he began as the pastor of New Life Church, there were few elderly people, and he didn't really see it as a problem. In time, however, his heart was changed by passages such as this one from the prophet Zechariah: "Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of their great age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing" (8:4-5). The very old and the very young, safe together, is a glimpse of the heavenly city God is building. It is the way things are meant to be.

Buchanan puts it this way: "Young and old together is more than a symptom of spiritual health, but is at the core of spiritual health: young and old love each other. Young and old seek out each other. Young and old learn from each other. Young and old live in the shelter of each other." Ainsley and Virginia formed this kind of shelter as their heads tilted together during that coffee hour after church. While

relationships formed between peers at Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, and church camps can help build faith, so can relationships between people from different generations.

RETA AND PETER

One such relationship was formed between my one-year-old son, Peter and his babysitter, Reta. Though elderly, she undertook the very physical task of caring for Peter, lifting him down from furniture and hoisting him away from electrical outlets. She preserved his life—or at least his limbs.

Peter was new to walking when he met Reta, and she is new to a wheelchair now. My family visited her at the hospital one day. She offered chocolates, which Anna and Peter—who receive grace promptly—cheerfully accepted. We talked about church events and Reta's health while Peter investigated the wonderful workings of Reta's hospital bed. When their Dad began to pray, Anna and Peter each held one of Reta's hands.

The moment was a gift. Reta had been Peter's caregiver, and he showed care for her by pausing long enough to pray. God's coming kingdom could be seen and felt in Peter's chocolate-smeared fingers joining Reta's hand in prayer to God our Father, to Jesus His Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Praying together, Reta and Peter were sheltered by each other and by their God.

BUILDING THE KINGDOM

Amid the challenges churches face maintaining brick-and-mortar buildings, there are signs of a heavenly kingdom being built here on earth, here in Sarnia.

"Sarnia?" my brother said, upon first hearing about our family's move to this city. "There's not much happening in Sarnia." But I know, because I have seen it, that God's kingdom is being built, even here. Among other places, it is present in the nodding together of white hair and cherubic curls during coffee time, and in the entwining of age-softened fingers with small hands in a hospital room.

NAMESAKE

Peter is named after his great-grandpa, Rev. Dr. Peter White, who passed away on March 12 of this year. My family received a small black binder of great-grandpa White's sermons. One of them cites the 1952 census, which recorded many new babies being born in Canada. Reflecting on all these babies, great-grandpa White invited his listeners: "Open your doors, and bring the children in. Open your hearts, and give the aged your love. Then the young shall see visions of God's love in their lives, and the old shall dream dreams." Amen, and amen. ■

Judith Farris is a writer in Sarnia, Ont. She worships with her family at Paterson Memorial.

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THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE ONLINE. **BY BRADLEY CHILDS**

CHRISTIAN DATING

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BLOG/BOOK

Devangelical is the brainchild of Erika Rae who grew up in a self-described "fundamental" and "evangelical" church. She talked to angels, thought Jesus made grape juice for his first miracle and participated in numerous exorcisms. As time went on, Erika claims she had more and more difficulty with the church of her upbringing and eventually decided to retreat into a time of reflection. Devangelical is not an attack on the faith she grew up with but rather a witty introspective about Christianity and culture. The blog and its like-titled book are Erika's way of self-discovery where she works through "a lot of heavy, scuffed-up, duct-taped baggage ... with clowns inside." She talks about all kinds of crazy things, writes great articles, and is a lot of weird fun.

FIND IT @ **devangelical.com.**

AN ATHEIST IN CHURCH

God or Godless: A collection of 20 short debates on God's existence is a book by seminary professor Dr. Randal Rauser and minister-turned-atheist philosopher John W. Loftus. It's an interesting work that developed out of a group of online conversations between the two. The book is spirited, it is clever and while most readers will find reasons to disagree with certain arguments from both sides, it is wonderful. This past June, John and Randal did a short tour of three churches in Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton, Alta. That's right, churches invited a popular atheist writer into their buildings and paid him to convince the people in their churches and communities that God does not exist. Of course, an apologist was also present.

FIND IT @ **randalrauser.com.**

Rev. Brad Childs is minister at First, Regina.

Amongst The Best

THE RECORD AWARDED AGAIN

For the fourth year in a row, the Presbyterian Record was named amongst the best Christian magazines by receiving an honourable mention at the annual Canadian Church Press awards. It was named best in show at the American Associated Church Press in 2010 and has placed each year since then.

The Record is mostly written by members of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and produced by a small editorial team, most of whom are also PCC members.

Harris Athanasiadis, Laurence DeWolfe, and Issa Saliba shared a first place in the media review category. Freelancer Melanie Ferrier received a third place citation for her feature article on migrant workers.

Abel Pandy received a second place for his photo essay on refugees living in Thunder Bay, Ont.

Connie Wardle received a second place for her news story on mothers who had been forced to give up their children many years ago.

Rev. David Webber received a second place in the personal reflection category for his column article, I Didn't Shoot My Wife's Horse.

The Record's art director Caroline Bishop continued her winning ways with a first for feature layout and a third for cover.

David Harris received a first place for his editorial Speaking Up When It Matters Most, in which he urged readers to "speak up about our God of love and faith."

Andrew Faiz received a first place for a photograph he took in Malawi.

Glad Tidings was also recognized at CCP this year with three awards.

PRESBYTERIAN RECORD

Worry About Today

NICARAGUANS TAKE LIFE AS IT COMES. **BY DENISE VANWISSEN**

"Hoy es el mañana que tanto te preocupaba ayer."

"Today is the tomorrow that had you so worried yesterday."—graffiti in Managua

Six a.m. Monday morning in Managua; the sun's barely up but it's already hot. People are heading to work, congregating around unmarked bus stops. Some bus stops even have bays now, but the buses can't always be bothered to pull into them. The backs of the men carry knapsacks, and those of the women have wet patches from their just-washed hair. The men's backs may well be sweaty, and the women's, dry, by the time the bus comes.

Ambulatory 'breakfast' vendors, on foot or bicycle, are selling coffee and simple white breads. Soon the fruit-seller women will arrive with their baskets and stools (and maybe a patio umbrella for shade), to camp out at the bus stops all day.

There's reportedly only 7.4 per cent unemployment in Nicaragua, according to a 2012 figure from the National Central Bank, but it takes only a day in Nicaragua (the poorest country in Central America) to see that this figure is light years away from reality. If you include the underemployed, or informal sector—folks like the breakfast and fruit-sellers who are barely breaking even—the figure rises to a much more believable and frequently cited 54 per cent of the working-age population.

A recurring dream I have of Managua is waiting at an intersection with the vendors moving towards my side of the car. That's nothing unusual, but after three or four vendors, they keep on coming—it's a never-ending line of closed faces filing past with their wares. My dream always ends or moves on before I can see if the line of vendors ever ends.

> There's reportedly only 7.4 per cent unemployment [here] ... but this figure is light years away from reality

Some people would say that an added benefit of a former Managua mayor's pet policy of replacing intersections with roundabouts was the elimination of street vendors there. But ➤

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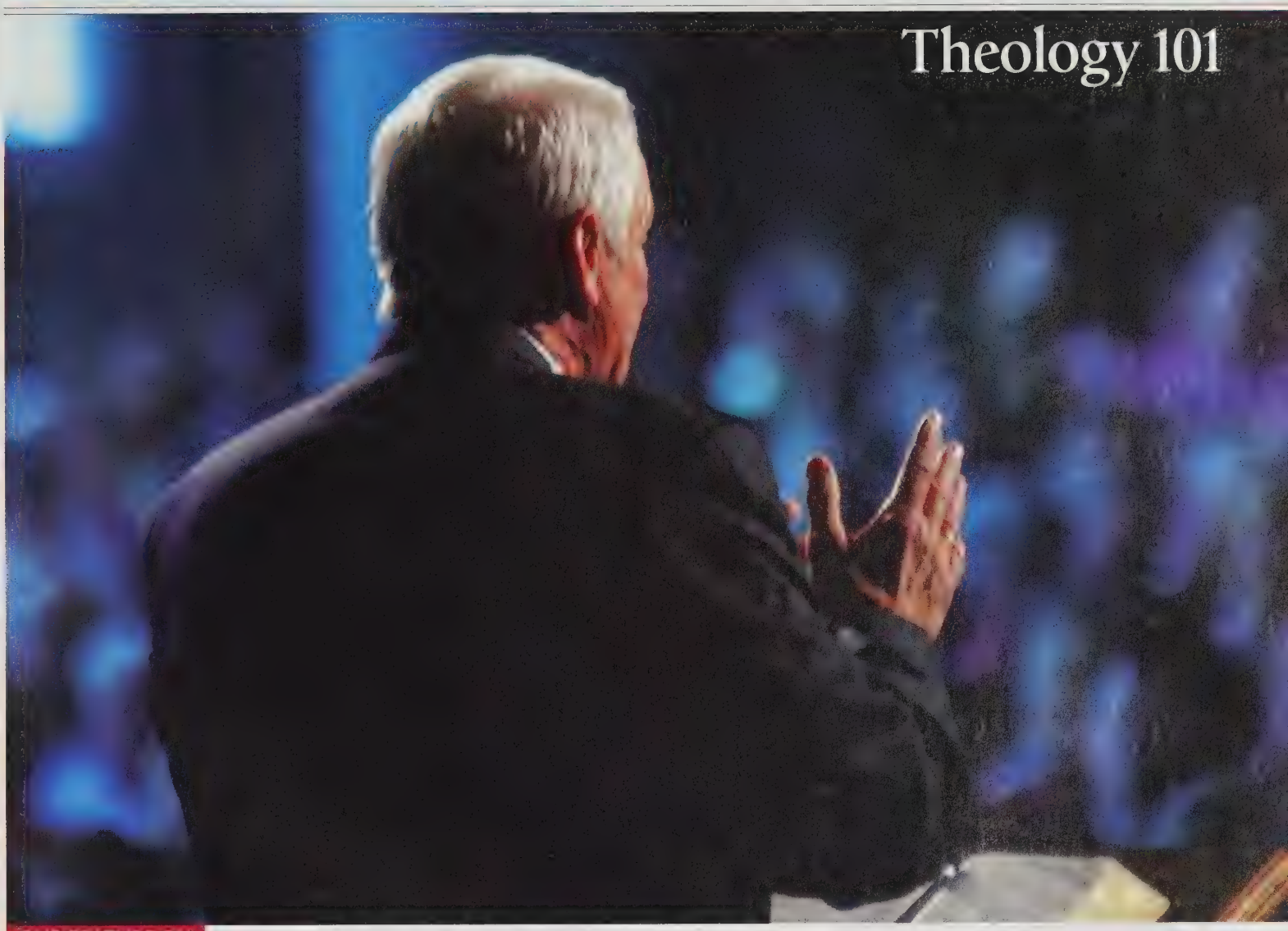
other, previously less busy intersections are now slow enough to accommodate all those vendors. On my way to work, there are two roundabouts and the several sets of traffic lights allow me a chance to get my windshield cleaned and to glance at the newspaper headlines the vendors hold up to drivers.

Sitting at one intersection, I get ready to duck as I see a young guy (grasping his windshield wipers and other saleable items in one hand) deftly lob a single-serve bag of water at a buddy. The friend reacts laughingly to the soaking, and then pulls his spandex sun protector off his arm to wring it out.

A national news analysis program once reported that one-*córdoba*-per-bag water vendors can earn more in a month than teachers in Managua. (It takes 25 *córdobas* to equal one Canadian dollar). But teachers themselves often work more than one job because they're paid only about $200 a month. That said, a young fellow who's been 'working' at the same intersection for as long as I've been driving to the office has switched to selling cell phone accessories.

As for that graffiti—Today is the tomorrow that had you so worried yesterday—I can't help thinking that it would better apply to North Americans than to folks here. Nicaraguans take things as they come. They don't expect life to be easy. Tomorrow may not take care of itself, but there's too much to handle today to be worrying about what *mañana* may bring. ■

Denise VanWissen is a missionary in Nicaragua, working with SOYNICA, a PCC partner organization, as Nutrition Advisor. She has enjoyed experiencing Managua's growing pains, including increasing traffic, for the last 21 years.



OUR FEATURE ON LIVING FAITH

Living Faith is a declaration of faith of the Presbyterian Church. You can download it at presbyterian.ca. We suggest you read the passage being discussed each month.

Previous articles in this series can be found at presbyterianrecord.ca.

Servants of the Word

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH PREACHING. **BY STEPHEN FARRIS**

LIVING FAITH 7.4 (PREACHING)

Marilynne Robinson, a novelist who knows more theology than most professors, has her chief character in the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Gilead,* an aged preacher, write for his young son: "A good sermon is one side of a passionate conversation. It has to be heard in that way. There are three parties to it, of course, but so are there even to the most private thought—the self that yields the thought, the self that acknowledges and in some way responds to the thought, and the Lord. That is a remarkable thing to consider."

"Remarkable" is not always the first adjective we connect with preaching. I think I know why. In addition to the regular round of preaching anyone connected with the church endures, I calculate that in my teaching career I have listened to more than 2,000 beginner sermons (and have fallen asleep in only three). I know about the flawed or absent treatment of the biblical text, stumbling or droning delivery, incoherent structure, plain banality and ➤

There is no particular form to a good sermon but there is a basic orientation. The first thing that *Living Faith* says about preaching is that it is 'good news'

bad grammar. (The line about falling asleep in only three is a boast not a confession.)

But every once in a while, even in class, something remarkable happens. A middle-aged woman hopes to become a chaplain because she doesn't believe she has the gifts for preaching. But she wrestles with a text from the Bible and tries to connect it to the life of a congregation. Despite the struggle or because of it, she finds her word or rather a Word finds her. As *Living Faith* puts it, "The Holy Spirit enables God's word to be heard in the word of preaching"... even by a professor made hard of spiritual hearing by 2,000 student sermons!

It is the 'someone else' who speaks in preaching, who makes a sermon remarkable. It may seem nothing more than 17 minutes of banality and boredom from one side and a weekly burden on another, but the third party, the Lord, is always passionate. This is true because the Lord is always passionate about those who may be saved through preaching.

The truly remarkable thing, then, can be stated very simply: God speaks through preaching. Theologian Karl Barth speaks of a threefold Word of God. The first and foundational Word is the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. He is God's irreplaceable Word to us. Other words, from nature or our own reason can supplement but never substitute for that Word. To Christ the Living Word, the Holy Spirit working through the written word, the Bible, testifies. Thirdly, when preachers proclaim the Living Word, appropriately attentive to the written word, their very human words can come to life, through the Holy Spirit, as God's Word. This understanding goes back to the roots of our tradition in the Reformation. "The Preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God" (Second Helvetic Confession 1.4.). That, too, is a remarkable thing to consider.

This kind of theology ought to have practical consequences. We claim to value preaching, so what makes a competent or even good sermon?

Living Faith calls ministers, "servants of the word." Servants are not free agents. They live under the authority of another. What they say ought not be a mishmash of their own reflections dressed up with a story about something that happened in the grocery store. Such addresses can sometimes be entertaining and occasionally wise but they are not good preaching. *Living Faith* also calls preachers "ambassadors." Good ambassadors speak what their Master intends them to convey.

There is no particular form to a good sermon but there is a basic orientation. The first thing that *Living Faith* says about preaching is that it is "good news." Many a sermon is not. The words "sermon" and "preaching" have received negative connotations because too many preachers have preached too many sermons primarily about what we ought to do (or not do) rather than proclaiming what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. The heart of our Reformed tradition is the recognition of the sovereign mercy of God to which we respond in joyful obedience. While a sermon can be about almost anything, our preaching ought to reflect that orientation.

Scottish poet Edwin Muir complained about the kirk of his day: "The Word made Flesh is here made word again." But every once in a while, the line is not complaint but gospel truth, the Word Made Flesh is present once again in the word of the preacher. That Word will address the real needs of our hearts and of our society, including needs we didn't know we had until we heard it. And it certainly will not be dull. Here is a more contemporary way of putting it, once again from Marilynne Robinson: "The Word that has seized the Preacher is, again, Christ." And when that happens there is nothing better on earth, and, I should think, nothing very much better in Heaven.

If I have one piece of advice to both preachers and hearers after much of a lifetime teaching preaching it is: This is remarkable stuff. Don't be easily satisfied. Don't settle. ■

Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris is dean of St. Andrew's Hall at the Vancouver School of Theology.

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The Hall of Fame of Faithfulness

HEBREWS 11 TELLS OF FAITH IN ACTION. **BY LAURENCE DEWOLFE**

August 11 (Pentecost 12)	August 18 (Pentecost 13)
Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16	Hebrews 11:29-12:2

The 11th chapter of the puzzling, anonymous Letter to the Hebrews is sometimes called the Hall of Fame of Faith. The Lectionary gives us two excerpts. In the first, the fame is Abraham's. In the second, fame is spread across named and unnamed Hebrew heroes. The first readers, Christians of Jewish heritage in the diaspora, probably read more recent experiences into the tales of persecution and endurance.

We have trouble with the word "faith." We too quickly equate faith, and its cognate noun and verb, "belief" and "believe," with accepting propositional statements about God and the meaning of life. We Presbyterians say confessing our faith is essential to Christian living. When we confess we make statements about God and the meaning of life. We say "Yes" to documents, like *Living Faith*, "This is what we believe. This is our faith."

Sometimes we speak of faith as if it's agreeing to accept something that doesn't make sense unless we see it through "the eyes of faith." We "take it on faith" even if everything tells us it's impossible. Mark Twain said it through Huck Finn: "Faith is believin' what you know ain't so."

We may understand that faith involves risk. We love Kierkegaard's phrase "the leap of faith." We often speak of a leap in the dark, across (or into!) an abyss. We may think we have to leap alone. Truth is, that jump isn't very dangerous, and we don't make it on our own. Yes, it takes us beyond what we may know and trust on our own. It takes us beyond ourselves. But Someone holds our hands and leaps with us. The ground is firm on the other side. If doctrine, "the faith," comes into it, it comes on the other side. After we've leapt. After we've faithed.

Yes, "faithed." A verb, not a noun. The New Testament word for faith, in all its forms, is active. Even the noun is more verb than noun. There's no direct ➤

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equivalent in the Old Testament. The closest concept is a cluster or words that roughly amount to "making yourself secure in God." Sounds a lot more like trusting God than assenting to doctrine about God.

We can only say what we believe about God, what we think is true about God, after we have met God and discovered God is trustworthy. Enter Jesus, God revealed in flesh and blood, word and action, example and commandment. We come to know and dare to confess our truth about God through Jesus. We respond to that discovery with our lives. We faith. We turn our lives toward faithfulness and we reflect God's faithfulness to the world and to us.

How about reading Hebrews 11 and substituting "faithfulness" for "faith"? In most places it works. Faithfulness connotes focus, determination, endurance, even risk, and especially love. The heroes of Hebrews didn't just accept the possibility of the result they sought or the goal they aimed for. Many of them doubted, big time! They acted, or they held on, not because of what they intellectually apprehended as reasonable. They did it because they knew Someone who would not leave them and would never fail them.

Sometimes they got to work, sallied forth, faced known and unknown risks. Sometimes they sat and waited on God. Sitting and waiting are active choices, acts of trust. We can read Hebrews 11 as a tale of magic. The heroes had faith, set their minds in the right direction, and look what happened! They didn't just set their minds. They put their whole selves into their faithfulness. When we speak of faithfulness, we avoid turning faith into magic.

The first words of Chapter 12 bring it home for us. The heroes are watching. Let's get busy! ■

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe teaches at Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

Embracing the Seasons of Life

THE CHURCH MAY CHANGE, BUT JESUS IS CONSTANT. **BY HEATHER MALNICK**

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under Heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

My family is currently transitioning through a new season. My father passed away three and a half years ago, and just a few months ago my mom moved into a retirement lodge. My brother and I, as my mom's powers of attorney, are currently overseeing the sale of our family home. My dad and a family friend built our home 44 years ago and no one but our family has ever lived in it. I have to admit that I felt my throat tighten when I saw the for sale sign go up in front of the place where countless Christmas dinners, birthdays and ➤

provisionaries

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James Naismith (1861-1939)

After graduating from Presbyterian College in Montreal, Naismith decided he could have a greater impact through sports than he could in congregational ministry. In 1891, Naismith invented a new game he planned to call, "Box Ball," to teach to his YMCA gym class. When all he could find were two old peach baskets, he changed the name to "Basket Ball." Today basketball is the third most popular sport in the world, helping to erase the economic and racial barriers that separate us from one another. And it all began because one Canadian Presbyterian decided he could use his love of sports to reach a new generation with Christ's love.

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The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Our families, and our church families, will transition through many seasons during our lifetimes

anniversaries have been celebrated. I remember the time I scratched the family car on the pole at the end of the driveway when learning to drive, and I have memories of trying to convince my parents to let me keep a horse in the basement. I have countless memories of years spent with the ones I love under the same roof.

But I'm reminded that even though our family house has sold, our family is still very much intact. My mom still provides us with comfort and support and my brother still teases me mercilessly—and I respond accordingly—as we always have. We just have different roofs over our heads.

The congregation I serve, Living Faith Community Presbyterian Church in Baxter, Ont., also has a different roof over its head. Our congregation is an amalgamation of the former Baxter and Cookstown Presbyterian churches and we moved into our new church home five years ago.

We had entered into a new season of our church life and realized that our former church buildings were not aiding us in our ministry, just as our family home is no longer suitable for my mom's changing needs. We had entered into a new season, and that meant change. Former church homes were sold. But the church family remained very much intact. And in fact, our church family has grown. New families who have no connection to the former congregations have joined us. New traditions have been formed. New memories are being made. New opportunities are being realized. A new season has begun. Life is being renewed.

The house my dad built 44 years ago will soon become a home for a new family. New memories will be formed and new traditions will be experienced. More Christmas dinners, birthdays, and anniversaries will be celebrated in new and different ways involving new and different people. A new season has begun. Life is being renewed.

Our families, and our church families, will transition through many seasons during our lifetimes. Sometimes that will mean change. Church/family homes might need to be sold. Church/family traditions might need to be altered. New and different experiences will be had by new and different people. How will we handle that? Our throats may tighten, as mine did when the for sale sign appeared in front of my family home, but I believe that we can transition through the seasons of our family/church life with grace and even joy when we remember there is one thing that never changes. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8) and he will journey with us through all our seasons, with our families and with our churches, helping us face change with grace and even joy. ■

Rev. Heather Malnick is minister at Living Faith Community, Baxter, Ont.

UNLIKELY BELIEVERS

HOW THE CHURCH SUPPORTED THE BOSMA FAMILY— AND WHY IT SHOULD.

A SAFE PLACE TO SHARE

A LESSON FOR THE CHURCH FROM THE DEATH OF TIM BOSMA. BY JEFF LOACH

The death of Tim Bosma was a sad story to hear, and to see unfold. Bosma was from Ancaster, Ont., and mysteriously disappeared while accompanying two men who had come to test-drive a truck he had put up for sale. His body was found, burned beyond recognition, on a farm near Ayr, Ont. So far, two men are under arrest for his murder.

By all accounts, Mr. Bosma was a man of Christian faith, active in his church community, and not involved with the 'wrong people.' Why was he killed?

The answers will, hopefully, come out in court. What I found especially interesting about the situation as it developed, though, was the role played by Mr. Bosma's faith community. After it was announced that his body had been found, and Mrs. Bosma spoke to the media, who was standing behind her?

Her family, yes—as one would hope and expect. And her pastor.

That spoke volumes to me.

It didn't have to be her pastor; it could have been her small group leader or a close Christian friend. Either way, her faith community was part of her support network. They were there for her in her time of trial.

Most of us, when we go through a crisis in life, don't have it displayed before the world via the press. Mrs. Bosma had little choice but to go public with her grief; thanks to the mainstream media and social media (which put up a remarkable campaign to help find her husband), her difficulties were widely known. Most people observe their grief, their pain, their problems, without such obvious support.

Why?

This is especially poignant for followers of Jesus. Why, when we have a whole community of love surrounding us, do we keep our troubles to ourselves? Too often, I fear, there is a tacit culture in the life of the church that says, "Be happy." Or, there may be a culture that says, "We don't know what to do when you grieve, so please keep it to yourself." And that's just wrong.

The church literally is "those called out" from the world to love and serve Jesus Christ and his Kingdom—and to love and serve his people. We are not iso-

lated individuals; we are a community. God calls us to look after each other, even when we don't know what to do or say. When Mrs. Bosma spoke to the media, her pastor stood behind her. He didn't say anything, and didn't have to say anything. We have no idea what he might have said to her privately, nor is it our business to know; but his mere presence spoke to the significance of a community of faith that wanted to rally behind one of its own who was grieving.

When you are going through a difficult time, do you feel safe enough to share it with your church leaders? With your small group? With the friends with whom you sip coffee after worship? Of course, we'd do well also to ask if your church community creates a culture of safety for you to share your trials. In an era of unprecedented connectedness via the Internet, we remain, largely, a disconnected society. People long for a place of safety, with real people who might not have all the answers but who serve a God who is big enough to know the answers and personal enough to care. Those real people are called "the Church."

How is your church doing in that regard? Is it a safe place to share? And are you willing to share your burdens? Give it a try. Hopefully you will experience the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit.

"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). ■

Rev. Dr. Jeff Loach is a minister at St. Paul's, Nobleton, Ont. This article was his May 17th post on his blog Passionately His. You can find the blog on the Record's *website.*

COMING TOGETHER

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS CRUCIAL IN TIMES OF TRAGEDY.

BY AMY MACLACHLAN AND SETH VEENSTRA

When Ancaster, Ontario's Tim Bosma went missing and was later found dead on a Waterloo-area farm, Canadians watching the investigation unfold in real time were shocked. In an almost immediate response, Ancaster churches mobilized—garnering support both locally and internationally, and across denominations—working together as Christ's community to come to the aid of the grieving family.

This need for community, particularly in the midst of agonizing loss, is where the Church can play a most critical role.

"The churches go out of their way to support one another. We found this out in spades in this particular crisis," said Rev. John Veenstra, Ancaster Christian Reformed Church's interim minister and the Bosmas' pastor.

Veenstra was the leading figure in this outpouring of support. He organized prayer services during the search, appeared beside Bosma's ➤

widow, Sharlene, during press conferences, and acted as a buffer to the media and wider community once Tim's body was found.

But he didn't do it alone.

"A huge network sprung into action," Veenstra told the *Record*. "We had two prayer services when they were still searching for Tim. He disappeared on the sixth [of May]. On the seventh a whole bunch of us church folks spontaneously organized a prayer service. Within four hours of deciding to do this we had 250 people joining with us at the service. They were from all over the community. Then on the 10th we had a community-wide prayer service—450 people showed up. The thing that struck me about the service on the 10th was the wide range of churches. There were people from 12 different congregations. I had 14 clergy there—I needed leaders for prayer rooms—and so we had six rooms for group prayer."

And it didn't end there. More than 1,600 people gathered in a Hamilton banquet hall for Bosma's televised memorial service, and the Sunday following, about 600 Christian Reformed congregations across North America sang "In Christ Alone My Hope is Found" during their own services to express solidarity and support. When Veenstra himself needed someone to talk to, the Ancaster Ministerial Association was there.

"The second week this broke, I made a point of going to the association's meeting, because the brothers and sisters gave me an opportunity to debrief and lean on them, which I did. So congregationally, the AMA was a big support, and personally as well. I genuinely appreciated it. It made the whole thing a little easier to cope with."

Veenstra was quick to sing the praises of Presbyterian minister, Rev. Henry Huberts of St. Andrew's, Ancaster. As the chairperson of the AMA—which also includes clergy from the local Anglican, United and Catholic Churches—he helped organize the ecumenical response.

"St. Andrew's has been a leading light in this, and that was spearheaded by Henry Huberts," said Veenstra.

Huberts, who has been involved with the Ancaster Ministerial for five years, believes strongly in the church's calling to be community. "I would say it is among one of the most important callings of the Church, for it testifies to the unity of believers and the love of God to the culture in which we find ourselves."

While the Christian Reformed Church, according to Veenstra, is known for its strong support to its members—Sharlene Bosma's elder was at her home the day Tim was pronounced missing to offer whatever help was needed—this tragedy ignited a reaction that was much larger.

"I heard from other reformed churches—I had never heard from these guys in the past, as there are differences, and all of a sudden, these differences didn't matter. They said, we're praying for you. All of a sudden, churches that normally don't talk to each other began to talk to each other. Then it went worldwide."

Veenstra said he heard musings at the memorial service about how people were struck by the overwhelming sense of community.

"I had people say to me, 'If that's how church works, I'm coming.' It expresses the yearning of their hearts."

A CBC Radio report (where Veenstra was interviewed for his take on the matter) said that people who are members of an active religious community are happier than those who are not. This comes as no surprise to the 71-year-old pastor.

"Sharlene is going to walk a difficult road, and her family is with her, but so is the church community. She knows she can call and they will spring to action,"

he said. "We often take this for granted in the church because it's our everyday reality. But outside the church, there are a lot of people who don't have that support, and could genuinely use it. It's a wonderful thing.

"When it comes to understanding the church order, the 'body' is one of the most fundamental ideas found in the New Testament," continued Veenstra. "We saw it here on the local, congregational level. And we found it at a community level as well because whatever we lacked as a congregation, the Ancaster community pitched in. In my experience it was a breathtaking example of the New Testament concept in action: the body in action." ■

Amy MacLachlan is the Record*'s senior writer. Seth Veenstra is a freelance writer living in Hamilton, Ont. He is not related to Rev. John Veenstra.*

CONTINUING CONVERSION

BOUNDLESS LOVE IN GOD'S ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY. BY KEVIN LIVINGSTON

One of the fundamental tenets of Jesus' teaching and preaching was that it demanded a response. The whole process of responding to the gospel of Christ and his kingdom is called conversion. It is through repentance and conversion that one becomes—and remains—a member of God's alternative community. But the conversion process is not just an emotional decision made by an individual about the spiritual priorities in his or her life. Conversion certainly involves the individual, and addresses the spiritual and the emotional dimensions of life, but it includes much more than that. Let me simply note that conversion, in the scriptures, always includes at least seven elements:

1. Conversion always involves a turning from (repentance) as well as a turning to.
2. The call to conversion goes out not only to unbelievers, but to believers as well. This was particularly true in the Old Testament. Indeed the call to repent and be converted was normally addressed to Israel.
3. Conversion is always contextual. It is linked to a specific moment in time (God's *kairos*), to a particular person or group, to a particular place or situation.
4. Conversion always implies a transfer of loyalty or allegiance. It implies an exchange of lords. It means becoming citizens of the Kingdom of God.
5. Conversion always involves an element of self-denial. Conversion is exactly the opposite of entering a state of relaxation and rest, for it involves losing oneself, leaving the self behind, and taking up a cross.
6. Conversion is a journey into the unknown. To follow Jesus implies a certain insecurity and homelessness (Matthew 8:20). This pilgrim's existence corresponds to God's pattern of leading His people Israel through the desert, in order that they might remain dependent upon God daily.
7. Conversion simultaneously implies new relationships with both God and humankind. It is vertical and horizontal, spiritual as well as societal (James 2:19-20, Hosea 12:6).

Conversion, then, involves a whole new way of life, a turning away from other loyalties to follow Christ. It means abandoning those things to which one is most attached and devoted. The fruits of repentance and conversion are as diverse as are the contexts in which the conversions take place. For some, like the apostle Paul, conversion meant a whole new attitude toward ➤

human relationships, so that he treated people in a new way, with love and respect (2 Corinthians 5:17). For others, like Zacchaeus, conversion was linked to abandoning his unjust practices and his obsession with material wealth.

The danger, of course, is that we can minimize or ignore some of these dimensions of the conversion process, and fall into what we might call cheap or selective conversion. That's where only certain parts of the gospel are really accepted, and so whole areas of our lives—consciously or unconsciously—remain unconverted. Cheap conversion allows us to make some peripheral sacrifices without being forced to come face to face with the costly, absolute demands of God. Cheap conversion compels us to pass the sermon on as easily as if it were the collection plate, so that we think the message God is speaking is to someone other than ourselves. Cheap conversion allows people to blame others when needed change doesn't come—rather than seeking to change ourselves.

No, becoming a member of God's community is a risky affair, because it means being ruthlessly honest with one another. It means demolishing all of the walls that protect us, and opening ourselves to God and to others.

Who is able to do such things? Or as the disciples put it, "Lord, who then can be saved?" In our own strength, none of us are capable of such a radical conversion. That's why conversion is ultimately the work of God in us, and not something we can do ourselves. For no one can come to Jesus unless he or she is drawn by the Father (John 6:44). We can only respond to God's gracious invitation with heartfelt repentance and sincere trusting faith, with the assurance, as scripture puts it, that "God is faithful; by Him you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

Jesus offered a whole new way to be the people of God in the world. He presented a new definition of community, where the old barriers have been torn down; and, a new interpretation of the present time, that in his life and ministry the new age of God's Kingdom had come; and he issued a prophetic call to true conversion.

But how are all these realities to be lived out by those of us who are seeking to "no longer be conformed to the patterns of this world" (Romans 12:2) but to be transformed by Christ and his message? Life in God's new family, in Christ's alternative community, is to be typified by a lifestyle of boundless compassion towards others. The "pattern of this world" that Paul spoke of is inward–looking and characterized by human self-centredness, selfishness and self-assertion. But the compassion that Christ lived out and expects from those who follow him is outward-looking, outgoing and other-centred, like the very nature of God Himself.

Indeed, the whole story of Israel is a narrative of a God who is passionately committed to love an undeserving people, and through that loving covenant relationship with Israel, to extend His saving blessing to all the nations of the earth. God's heart of compassion was the compelling reason the Son of God left his home in heaven and humbled himself to become a human being in the person of Jesus

Life in God's new family, in Christ's alternative community, is to be typified by a lifestyle of boundless compassion towards others

of Nazareth. And this compassion was at the very core of Christ's ministry and teaching.

We see it from the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus asked the lawyer, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" The lawyer had to admit grudgingly: "I suppose it was the man who had compassion on him." And Jesus said, "Go and do as he did" (Luke 10:36-37).

Upon whom did Jesus show compassion? Listen to this litany of persons mentioned in the gospels: Jesus offered compassion to the poor, the blind, the lame, the lepers, the hungry, the sinners, those who weep, the sick, children, widows, captives, the persecuted, the down-trodden, the last, the least, those who are weary and heavily burdened, the lost sheep, and on we could go. (See Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*.) Yet these were the very same people that the Pharisees labeled as sinners, and the "rabble who knew nothing of the law" (John 7:49).

What a contrast between the boundless compassion of Jesus and the total lack of compassion of the Pharisees, with their cold, hard, judgmental attitude! Jesus had a heart for those who were lost; indeed he said that he came to seek and to save those who were lost (Luke 15). And he judged people in accordance with the way they treated these lost ones. For Jesus, compassion was to be the one, overriding characteristic of God's new community, and the test par excellence of true discipleship.

And what does a community shaped by the compassion of Jesus look like? We are called to be a community that finds our identity and life in Christ and his cross. We are to be a community that is loving and united, hospitable and sharing. We are an evangelizing, missional people, vigilant in prayer, gifted by the Spirit for service, and holding each other accountable to grow in grace.

Now that's a truly tall order, indeed! And we are still very far from the ideal. But because of what Christ has done for us on the cross, it has now become a possibility for us ... and a responsibility!

By the power of God's Spirit, we are called to press on and strive for this vision of the alternative community, because the very credibility of the gospel is at stake. That was the thing that excited the interest of non-Christians in the first century: the quality of brotherly love in the new Christian communities.

Numerous mission historians have written that the central factor in the rapid and spontaneous expansion of the church in its first centuries of existence was the quality of life and relationships that it provided for its members. Wherever Christians popped up, they roused the interest of the populace because there were no observable social barriers between them. Historians calculate that by 300 A.D., fully half the population in the cities of the Roman Empire were Christian. And this expansion occurred not because of some well-organized missionary strategy but through the winsome witness of thousands of ordinary Christian believers. And we also know that their verbal witness would have been useless had it not been sustained by their community life, and their compassion towards all, including non-believers.

These factors undoubtedly attracted attention to the early church, including both admiration and persecution. But one way or the other, the church in the first century surely provoked a reaction for the world around them, which is more than you can say for most churches today.

The point, which is as valid in our day as in the first century, is that you don't evangelize people just by speaking to them. People will always believe their eyes first. And they will never believe something they hear—no matter how beautiful and attractive it is—when it is flatly contradicted by what they see. All our efforts at evangelism and discipleship will be less than useless unless something is done about the credibility of the quality of our lives.

The real stumbling block to evangelism therefore often happens to be the church itself—the very church whose reason for being is to be a pointer to Christ and to attract men and women to him! The church is called to a continuing conversion. The key to the renewal of the church will not be found through a marketing scheme or a church growth campaign or adopting the latest trendy program. It will be found when we rediscover our calling to be the people of God, living out a lifestyle of transparent, practical, Spirit-filled love for our neighbours, and especially among our brothers and sisters in the household of faith. ■

Rev. Dr. Kevin Livingston is associate professor of pastoral ministry at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto. This article is a small portion of a talk he gave at the annual Continuing Education gathering at the Presbyterian College, Montreal, last February.

139th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Lord Jesus, it is so easy for us to choose work over worship, activity over reflection, busyness over prayerfulness and action over faith.

It is so easy for us to be so heavenly minded that we can choose to be spectators at worship: pew sitters instead of servants, content to let others do ministry while we live by faith but rarely act on it.

As this General Assembly opens, teach us the value of worshipful work. Teach us how to make the worship we offer and the work we do at this assembly a sacred unity and an offering pleasing to you.

—Excerpt from a liturgical drama written by Rev. Dr. Neal Mathers and performed during General Assembly's opening worship service.

Assembly Business

A QUICK LOOK AT THE MOST TALKED-ABOUT DECISIONS. BY CONNIE WARDLE AND AMY MACLACHLAN

Biennial Assemblies

The idea of moving from annual to biennial assemblies stirred up much debate.

On the floor of assembly, Rev. Paul Johnston spoke against the idea. He referred to the church doctrine committee's previous work on the subject, which spoke unfavourably about such a change, and reminded commissioners that a previous assembly endorsed the practice of meeting each year. Johnston said annual assemblies are a precious Presbyterian event, and that changing such a thing would be like Esau selling his birthright for a bowl of porridge.

Rev. Peter Coutts from the Presbytery of Calgary-Macleod, spoke in favour of the change. "What kind of denomination do we want to be and how do we achieve that?" he said. "Assembly Council has spent a lot of work on how to adjust the budget, modestly. We've got to think much more about the bigger picture, including things that are very important to us. What are the most important values for our future? If we move to biennial assemblies, we still have good governance. We'll manage. We'll adjust. It's about vitality and being able to hand over a healthy church to the next generation."

Eventually, the assembly agreed to send a proposal on biennial assemblies to the committees and courts of the church for study and report by Jan 31, 2014. The original motion would have "approved biennial assemblies in principle," but these words were removed before the recommendation was passed.

Presbyterians Sharing Formula

The assembly approved a new formula to calculate suggested allocations to Presbyterians Sharing, the church's national mission and ministry fund.

Starting in 2014, each congregation will be asked to contribute 10 per cent of its dollar base (or its income in a given year, minus all money contributed for mission purposes or used to repay debts).

This will replace the current formula, which is also calculated using the dollar base; it asks for 13 per cent of the first $50,000, 18 per cent of the next $50,000 and 21.5 per cent of the remainder.

Option to Eliminate Synods

An overture from the Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario asked for the creation of a special committee to explore how synods might shift their duties and responsibilities to other groups within the church. It expressed hope that, eventually, individual synods would be able to choose whether to dissolve or continue to operate as a court.

Following discussion on the floor, the assembly endorsed the recommendation to create the special committee to look into the issue.

Integrating Immigrant Congregations

An overture from the Presbytery of Montreal asked for "tools to aid in the integration of 'ethnic' congregations, including a timeline to expect compliance to the Book of Forms."

The clerks of assembly offered a resource that provides an overview of the structures and governance of the denomination.

However, Warren Wong, a commissioner from the Presbytery of Montreal, said the overture did not ask for "literature" so much as "procedures" to help presbyteries handle issues that can come up when immigrant congregations struggle with the PCC's polity. Congregations planted by immigrant communities may use procedures from their previous churches; however, congregations within the PCC are expected to follow the policies and procedures in the Book of Forms. This can lead to strife for congregations and presbyteries.

The assembly agreed to refer the recommendation back to the clerks of assembly for more study.

Presbytery Vote

The clerks advised against creating legislation that would, under certain circumstances, allow ministers on the appendix to the roll of a presbytery or lay missionaries serving in congregations to vote at presbytery meetings. They suggested ministers on the appendix and lay missionaries ➤

can participate meaningfully in the court without taking on the responsibility of voting.

Israel-Palestine

Several recommendations from the International Affairs Committee asked the moderator to write to government officials about issues related to Israel. These ignited much debate, although all the committee's recommendations were eventually passed.

While the Presbyterian Church supports the right of Israel to exist, it is sensitive to the daily challenges faced by Palestinians. Several commissioners balked at the recommendations, which included having the moderator write to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to ask, "what measures Canada takes to persuade Israel to lift the restrictions it places on the movement of people and goods that hamper economic development in the West Bank." One commissioner called the recommendation anti-Semitic. Others, however, called this a justice issue and suggested congregations and individuals should write to their Members of Parliament to express their concerns and to ask for action.

Rev. Iona MacLean of Pictou presbytery spoke in favour of the motion, saying: "Justice is always a messy business ... Over the years, we've been in conversation with people in Israel and Palestine, trying to see the way towards peace. We don't come to these discussions lightly or uniformed ... We support Israel's right to exist, but also Palestine's right to its own governance. We can't solve this by ourselves, but if there are ways we can foster dialogue to this conflict, I pray that it would be so."

An additional motion made by Rev. Paul Johnston, Presbytery of Lindsay-Peterborough, asked the International Affairs Committee to compile a summary of previous assembly decisions regarding the right of Israel to exist within secure borders and of the actions taken to implement those decisions. He asked the committee to report its findings to the 140th General Assembly and publish this information in other church publications as appropriate.

Women's Missionary Society

In her remarks, Betty Siverns, incoming president of the WMS, promoted the second National Presbyterian Women's Gathering, which will be held on May 16-19, 2014 in Richmond Hill, Ont. The event begins one day after the mission organization's 100th anniversary.

In light of their centennial, the WMS proposed a big change for the organization. Along with a change in the constitution, which will allow the society to hold their general meeting every two years instead of every year, they asked for the creation of a national women's organization called the Presbyterian Church in Canada Women. The recommendation asked for the PCCW to be approved in principle as an umbrella organization that would include the current WMS groups, the women's gathering, and new groups with new names.

While commissioners weren't opposed to creating a new group, they were unsatisfied with the information-gathering process. It was noted that the Atlantic Mission Society, which includes women, men and children in the Atlantic provinces and Newfoundland, was never consulted.

Jennifer Whitfield, AMS president, noted that men are part of both the WMS and AMS, and argued that a new national mission group should be created for men, women and children. "Mission is for everyone within the church and we mustn't lose track of that," she said.

Rev. Paul Kang, West Toronto presbytery, noted there are many Korean women who are involved in mission but don't identify with the WMS. They might be willing to get involved with their own groups, he suggested.

Rev. Sarah Kim, WMS executive director, said this is exactly the kind of thing they envision for the "new groups" category. She said they have heard from women who like to gather together, but are not prepared to join the WMS because they view it "as their mother's group." An umbrella organization could include those smaller groups, letting the members decide what they're about, how they'd like to function, and what their needs are.

In the end, the assembly sent the recommendation back to the WMS for further work, asking them to return next year.

Sharing Inspiration

The assembly spent a good deal of time sharing "good news" stories from congregations. Various ministers told the court how their congregations have changed, grown, and been renewed and invigorated by and for the work they do. Be sure to watch upcoming issues of the *Record* for these stories!

For more General Assembly business and photographs, visit presbyterianrecord.ca.■

Connie Wardle is the Record's *staff writer. Amy MacLachlan is senior writer.*

Love Your Neighbour

WHAT I WILL REMEMBER FROM GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

BY MICHAEL YEN

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, praise His holy name!" Indeed, the words from this praise song, taken from Psalm 103, are fitting for the commissioners gathered for the General Assembly. Our almighty God is very much alive and is turning people's hearts back to Him through faithful witness of brothers and sisters in Christ, within our denomination and beyond.

As a first-time commissioner to the General Assembly, I have seen how our church is thriving from coast to coast. The encouraging stories shared on Sunday really gave me a renewed interest in improving the dynamics between our church neighbours and the congregation. Our neighbourhood is our mission field and I look forward to the time of harvest.

In Sunday's panel discussion, Rev. Kent Burdett invited commissioners to go and love our neighbours instead of focusing on church growth alone. We must not be obsessed with the idea of "bigger is better," but we ought to foster an environment promoting Christian witness wherever we are—in our families, churches, schools, work places and communities. ➤

Voices of the 139th General Assembly

WHAT STUDENTS AND SPECIAL GUESTS HAD TO SAY.

Todd Nelson

This commitment to being together, to discerning the leading of the Spirit together, has been encouraging. It has also been a reminder of how we as Presbyterians are a people committed to being the church together.

— student representative from the Presbyterian College, Montreal

Margaret Evans

The Presbyterian Church has often been accused of standing in contrast with the societal times. ... Perhaps God's request of us now, as we work towards leaving this time of decision-making and fellowship, is to be imposed on by the Spirit's will for all people of God's creation; to be made more uncomfortable, more disquieted so that we have no choice but to experience the fullness of the will and works of God in every aspect of our lives.

— student representative, St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver School of Theology

Anita Van Nest

I had a surprising conversation with a young man in my congregation. He is 13 years old and a year ago he made his profession of faith.

He's kind of a neat kid. He asks lots of challenging questions about God and the ancient Israelites and the church today.

He said to me, I heard about some stats on the declining number of members in the Presbyterian Church. They say they crunched the numbers and they have come up with the

continued on page 37 ...

Michael Yen

I had the privilege to see how Presbyterians across Canada argue with manner and sincerity. The moderator played an important role when things got a little intense. Sometimes we were asked to stand so a close vote could be counted. But we worshipped in unison and we were unanimous in the vast majority of issues, in particular, the motion to adjourn.

The reports from different ministries and agencies were uplifting. Congregations need to be made aware of the impact of their contributions to Presbyterians Sharing. I am glad to see how youth were represented and how the Assembly Council ensures equal representation from clergy and lay people.

Rev. Dr. John Vissers, outgoing moderator, reminded us in his sermon on Sunday evening, "Unity celebrates diversity. Uniformity seeks to eradicate it. Uniformity is coercive and exclusive, it wants to dominate and control and assimilate. But true unity is characterized by love, which does not seek its own way. Because that's who God is."

The beauty of God's kingdom is anchored in the unanimous adoration and praise to the Creator in spite of the disagreements among His children on lesser issues. This image of unity is also visible in a married couple where two distinct individuals come together with different backgrounds, genetic makeup and personalities. Somehow, love comes in to unite the two souls and makes the couple as one, with a common vision to build a family, a God honouring family.

As a concluding thought, I wonder how we can best respond to His grace and love? I believe that God wants us to do the simple things, such as loving our neighbours and meditating on His words day and night, and He will pour out His amazing power in response and use us as His channels of peace.

May all glory, honour and praise be unto our loving Father. ■

Michael Yen is the representative elder from Taiwanese Robert Campbell Presbyterian in Montreal.

To Travel is to Learn

A MALAWIAN AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY. **BY JOSHUA NYANGULU**

In Malawi it is widely believed that education is not only acquired through formal education systems, but by merely crossing borders to different parts of the world.

This belief came to mind on my first day of attending the 139th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada at Seneca College, Toronto, where I was tempted to dance to the tune of the old adage. My take on this is two-fold; I agree that traveling exposes people to new and different things, but it is interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds that plays a bigger role as a source of gaining knowledge and new ideas. My presence at assembly provided the opportunity to engage ministers and elders from across the church, and through these interactions I can claim to have added a reasonable amount of knowledge about the church and life in Canada.

Just as it was not possible for the gospel writers to record all that Jesus had done (John 21:25), it is also not possible for me to scribble all the bits and pieces that fell on the discussion plate. Our main focus was based on worship and the messages that dominate the pulpits here in Canadian churches, compared to those in Malawi.

In Malawi, the themes that run across the pulpits usually pivot on hope for the suffering, God's intervention in human history, condemnation of cultural practices that seem to be in conflict with the word of God, and punishment for sin, while my Canadian counterparts shared that their messages revolve around the goodness of God, forgiveness, wholeness, and the love of God.

What a difference.

The different approaches were not that surprising,

Rev. Joshua Nyangulu greets the Moderator

considering the different contexts of the two churches. The Malawian church members are going through difficult times socially as well as economically, hence the message of hope for God's intervention in their suffering befits them. HIV/AIDS has not spared the already starving people in Malawi, making this message relevant to the suffering, the orphans, and those taking care of them. This is in sharp contrast with the Canadian church where members generally live comfortable lives and I would think never go to sleep on empty stomachs. Their themes befit them, too.

That aside, at assembly I had the privilege of speaking with ministers from the Korean and Ghananian churches, so-called "immigrant churches" by one of their ministers, who indicated that these churches are enjoying rapid increases in membership while there is a general lamenting of membership decline in most indigenous congregations. A minister from one of the Ghananian congregations, Rev. Sowah Ablorh, attributed the growth to the "immigrant" parent's ability to encourage their children to go to church. I think there is something for others to learn from this strategy.

I would be remiss not to mention the memorable opportunity of being the first Malawian minister and journalist to congratulate Rev. Dr. David Sutherland after he was named moderator of the 139th General Assembly. The former moderator, Rev. Dr. John Vissers visited Malawi at the end of 2012. ■

Rev. Joshua Nyangulu is the literature officer for the Livingstonia Synod, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, in Mzuzu, Malawi. He was working at the Record *until the end of June as part of the magazine's international internship program.*

year—a year within the boy's lifetime—when there will be no Presbyterians left. And then he started to cry. When he got control of himself he asked, "Where will I worship then?"

And I thought to myself: Our children are listening. So what are we saying?

I say that numbers don't tell the whole story and flat pieces of paper don't predict the future, nor do they control the movement of the Holy Spirit.

I know we know—especially after this General Assembly, where we have heard so many stories of hope, of inspired congregations, of Presbyterians who trusted God and gave their life's energy to living out their faith—we know that there is more, much more to God's great plan yet to be revealed to us.
—student representative from Knox College, Toronto

E.H. JOHNSON AWARD WINNER:

Rev. Dr. Abraham Berinyuu

I have learned in pastoral theology that to fully accept another person or party there has to be full disclosure on both sides. One cannot encounter a person fully without fully accepting the other. And one cannot encounter or accept without full disclosure. "This is who I am." ...

The person—either Muslim or Christian—must fully accept themselves as worthy and not view their worth as under attack. At the same time, the conflicted parties must come to recognize each other's worth. To see themselves—and the other—as God sees them; to accept that God loves them without reservation or distinction.

You will readily understand that this principle comes into play in the interactions experienced by a disabled person in his or her community.
—winner of the 2013 E.H. Johnson award for cutting-edge mission. Berinyuu is a member of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. To read his full address and a short biography, visit presbyterianrecord.ca. ■

Love One Another

EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T AGREE.

A Hindu pandit spoke to the assembly this year. His remarks rubbed some the wrong way. Here are some excerpts:

We don't want accommodations, we want acceptance. Acceptance of who we are. We want inclusion; that we are equal participants in the society we live in. And we want respect for our religion and our way of life.

If you respect us, then do not attempt to convert us to what you believe in. Because that is the highest form of disrespect, when you tell me what I believe in is not good and only what you believe in is the best.

I was born in Guyana. And all the schools I went to were Christian denomination schools. I went to mass every Wednesday. I went to communion also; but I was a Hindu. I was always amazed when someone stood in a pulpit and said to me that the only way to Heaven is Jesus Christ. And then I asked the question, when did Christianity come into reality? And he said 2,000 years ago. And I said, did anyone go to Heaven before that?

If we want to really coexist in harmony, we have to genuinely respect the beliefs of others and see that they too have a tradition that builds a relationship with God.
—Pandit Roopnauth Sharma, Hindu interfaith guest

I, along with a number of others, were deeply offended when we gave our Hindu guest a platform that he used to mock our faith and our saviour, Jesus Christ. We do not worship the same God as they do. ... We worship the triune God made known through the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Our God calls us to make disciples, which to him is an insult. We believe God calls His children through Jesus Christ from the foundation of the world. Our guest made a joke when he said that if we believe that people can get to Heaven through Christ, then what about those who lived before Christ? We were mocked and we responded with applause and gifts. I am offended.
—Rev. John Fraser on the floor of assembly

I would like to take a pastoral moment at this point because I felt what my brother felt, although I don't think I thought what my brother thought. ... When we evangelize, when we reach out to others, they hear us not with what we intend but with what they have experienced. I want to tell you that standing on the podium I felt anger and then I felt hurt under the anger. As I heard words expressed, I began to identify or at least recognize, perhaps, some of those roots of anger.

I've always been amazed at some of the Old Testament prophets who probably lived very righteous lives but who were willing to take their stand before God in the midst of the sins of the others around them. I want to say that the Jesus of the manger in Bethlehem tells us about love incarnate. And that Jesus tells us to love one another within the community, to love our neighbour as ourselves, and even to love our enemy, or those we perceive to be our enemies. The Jesus of the Bethlehem cradle calls us to love. And the Jesus of the cross of Calvary tells us that we should not expect to be loved in return.
—Rev. Dr. David Sutherland in response to Fraser's remarks

To read Roopnauth Sharma's address, visit presbyterianrecord.ca. ■

Agents of Hope

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND: DEBATING BUT UNDIVIDED. **BY KATIE MUNNIK**

This was to be a pivotal year for the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. On the agenda was the much-anticipated report of the Theological Commission on Same-sex Relationships and the Ministry. The Scottish media was reporting that up to 60 congregations were considering leaving the denomination in the aftermath of the report.

Saturday began formally with the election of the Right Reverend Lorna Hood as moderator, and an address from the Lord High Commissioner, Lord Selkirk of Douglas. He acts as the royal representative to the Church of Scotland—Governor General to the GA, if you like—reflecting the Kirk's position as the national church of Scotland, and the Queen's position as a member of that church. This tradition is an ancient one and marks the fact that prior to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, the General Assembly *was* the highest court in Scotland.

Sunday was a day of rest—complete with a festival in Princes Street Gardens. There was music, storytelling, workshops, and tents hosted by committees and congregations. I was impressed by one run by the Presbytery of Orkney. Looking to fill several clergy vacancies, they invited local tourist groups and businesses to join them in drumming up enthusiasm for the remote chain of islands. Cheese, fudge, and beautiful photos—and a line of collars engaged in conversation. Vacancy committees might be wise to take notes.

Debate began on Monday. For many years now, the Church of Scotland has been considering the place of homosexuality in the Kirk. The debate for this year asked if there is space to include ministers in committed same-sex relationships. The Theological Commission had received its remit in 2011—to consider the theological implications of all sides of this discussion—and this year, the Commission presented two opposing recommendations, leaving the decision in the hands of the General Assembly. I found the mood in the Assembly Hall extraordinary. Despite the diversity of strongly held opinions, there was a spirit of unity. Again and again, the phrase "a broad church" was repeated. It seemed that the Kirk felt a profound calling to remain united.

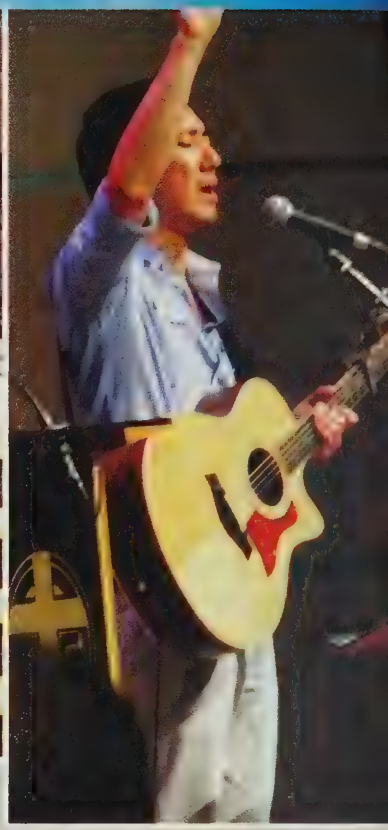
Former moderators—the Very Reverend John Cairns and the Very Revered Albert Bogle—made additional recommendations, hoping to bring to light new paths of unity. In the end, after much debate, the General Assembly decided on a compromise. The existing doctrine and practice of the Kirk will be upheld (excluding those in same-sex relationships from the ministry) but individual congregations will be given the freedom to call the minister of their own choosing. There will be more debate as to the legal and practical implications of this path next year, but for the meantime, this decision in effect upholds two very Presbyterian traditions: the independent right of the congregation to select their own minister and the strong communal emphasis on adherence to the authority of scripture. It was also a decision that reflected the Kirk's calling to love and serve Christ in the larger community. Cairns later said, "Winning the argument is just not everything... The Church of Scotland is a humble church. It knows that its role is to be servants to a larger community than its members."

Throughout the week, this united mood continued. Through debates on controversial pension reform, the situation in Israel and Palestine, and legal questions on the implications for the Church of Scotland of independence for Scotland following next year's referendum, the Kirk demonstrated a strong calling to be united in Christ. It looked like sound, democratic work—debating and listening, and seeking ways forward rather than ways to defeat. It also looked like work of the Spirit, providing the church with the wide variety of gifts needed to serve in today's context.

In her final morning reflection, Rt. Rev. Lorna Hood called on the commissioners to be "agents of hope." "We need to be the agents of that hope and we can do it not because of our gifts and talents and not because we believe the church is going in the direction we had hoped. We can be agents of hope because of the message, because of the story we have to tell, the message of God's love as it comes to us in Jesus." ■

Katie Munnik is an Ottawa writer currently living in Edinburgh, Scotland, with her studying husband and three growing children. You can read her blog, The Messy Table, at presbyterianrecord.ca

A pride of moderators.



Our Hidden Treasure

WE SHOULD SEEK THE COMMUNITY OF THE SPIRIT. **BY DAVID SUTHERLAND**

The substance of our beliefs is important. The responsibility of what we do is important. The style by which we live our faith in word and deed is equally important. With those things in mind, I invite you to join me on a journey through the coming year. Some of the interesting places I hope to include are Gros Morne in Newfoundland and Labrador, sites in India where your generosity has reached, and the community in which you live.

The goal of this journey is a re-acquaintance with an old friend, the Companion of the Christian and the Church. This friend is sent to help us live a balanced unity in what we believe, what we do, and the spirit in which we do both. The Old Friend is the One Jesus described as the Holy Spirit. Our Reformed heritage offers a particularly rich and informed appreciation for the life and ministry of the Spirit.

At the 139th General Assembly, our worship was focused on Jesus' prayer, "I ask... that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one."

John's gospel places this prayer directly following an introduction of our companion, the Advocate and Helper. The Holy Spirit is the person we are invited to come to know and celebrate in the company of the Father and the Son.

Earlier in the text, we are introduced to the Spirit at Jesus' baptism, confirming the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the event. In Chapter 3, in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, he is described as the agent of our new birth into the kingdom of God.

PORTRAIT BY WESLEY BATES/THREEINABOX.COM

Sadly, the real treasure of the church—relationships with God and with one another—is becoming second place

John tells us that in reference to the Holy Spirit Jesus said, "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes." Some have heard in these words a discouragement against ever seeking out the Spirit. I hear the reality that the Spirit is not to be controlled or manipulated any more than the Father or the Son.

There is plenty of encouragement throughout the scriptures to know better and seek out the Holy Spirit. One of my favourite lines is in Paul's letter to the Galatians and the invitation to cultivate the "fruit of the Holy Spirit" in our relationships. Popular characteristics of the culture—"the desires of the flesh"—are contrasted with the fruit of the Spirit. Those of the Spirit build and enhance relationships. Those of the flesh erode them.

Our church stands in danger of being impoverished by our real estate. Our buildings have become our treasure. Too often, the congregation has become the servant of the building rather than the building being the servant of the congregation. Sadly, the real treasure of the church—relationships with God and with one another—is becoming second place. In our 21st-century culture of increasing isolation, what an opportunity we have to offer relationships of eternal quality!

In Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are invited to become part of the divine fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a fellowship defined by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. To deliberately cultivate relationships of these qualities as lived by God is to encounter and celebrate the life and ministry of the Holy Spirit. ■

Rev. Dr. David Sutherland is minister at St. Andrew's, St. John's.

People & Places

To make People & Places submissions, email: **peopleplaces@presbyterianrecord.ca**

First, Stellarton, N.S.
Since all members have gifts for ministry, this team of congregants led the worship service on the second Sunday in Lent. In the front row are Brenda Butler, Margie Beck, Evie Fraser, Isabel Reid and Ed Carr. In the back row are Vanessa Campbell, Adrian Pearson, Margie Taylor and Ryan Sharpe.

Herriot Bay Inn, Quadra Island, B.C.
Led by Rev. Ken Oakes on saxophone, the Good News Jazz Band performs gospel and jazz for a full house. Ken has been sharing the gospel through music for more than 40 years.

Presbyterian Music Camp, Muskoka, Ont.
Sean Militello leads the camp choir through a lively rendition of Stephen Hatfield's "All Too Soon" at last summer's camp concert. The choir was one of many workshops to showcase participants' creativity as the weeklong camp drew to a close. For more info on PMC visit musicamp.ca.

Morningside-High Park, Toronto

F.O.G. (Four Old Guys) headlined a church coffee house in April. Besides bringing community and church members together for a fun evening of food and music, the event also helped the church raise money to upgrade their audio/visual gear. Pictured (from left), are Blair Gerrie, clerk of session, Rev. Karen Dimock, and F.O.G: Stephen Weiman, Stephen Springer, Francis Martin and Allen Stuart, who is also a member of the church.

Kirkwall, Ont.

Howard Hill takes guests on a wagon ride through neighbouring farms as part of a community dinner. Guests from the church and community also enjoyed crafts, lasagna and a discussion on what community building means to them.

Union, Albert Bridge, N.S.

During a recent visit to Cape Breton, where he guest-led a service and workshop, Rev. Dr. John Vissers is presented a walking stick by the congregation. Pictured here are elder Victor Ravanello, Vissers, and the church's pastor, Rev. Lydia MacKinnon.

ONLINE EXTRA

ON OUR WEBSITE:

A church in Ajax, Ont., pays tribute to the children lost in the Sandy Hook school shooting; Knox, St. Thomas, Ont., celebrates mission awareness Sunday; and St. Andrew's, Belleville, Ont., offers kudos and cake to first responders.

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Ministry Opportunities

SYNOD OF THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Merigomish, N.S., St. Paul's and Westville, N.S., St. Andrew's; Two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Iona MacLean, 17 Prince St., PO Box 1840, Pictou, NS B0K 1H0; 902-485-4298; ionamac@eastlink.ca.

Saint John, N.B., Saint Columba; Half-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Wendy MacWilliams, 28 Somerset Dr., Hanwell, NB E3C 1M8; 506-206-5031; wendymacwilliams@rogers.com.

Tabusintac, N.B., St. John's, New Jersey, Zion and Bartibog, N.B., St. Matthew's; Full-time three point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Derek Krunys, 206 Wellington St., Miramichi, NB E1N 1M7; dkrunys@hotmail.com.

Truro, N.S., St. James and St. Paul's; Full-time minister for two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Michael Koslowski, 2-75 Altavista Lane, Halifax, NS B3N 0A1; 902-402-6747; michaelkoslowski@eastlink.ca.

SYNOD OF QUEBEC AND EASTERN ONTARIO

Arnprior, St. Andrew's; Full-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Seung Kim, 24 Ethel St., Petawawa, ON K8H 2C1; 613-687-2463; seung37@hotmail.com.

Richmond, Ont., St. Andrew's; Full-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Kelly Graham, 5533 Dickinson St., Manotick, ON K4M 1A6; 613-692-4228; revkgraham@gmail.com.

SYNOD OF CENTRAL, NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO AND BERMUDA

Ajax, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Lois Whitwell, 445 Beverly St., Oshawa, ON L1G 1P9; 905-579-8255; loiswhitwell@rogers.com.

Kapuskasing, St. John's Presbyterian and Kapuskasing United; Full-time minister for the new ecumenical shared ministry; Interim Moderator Rev. Arlene Onuoha, 113 Preston St., Timmins, ON P4N 3N1; 705-264-1051; arleneonuoha@hotmail.com and Pastoral Charge Supervisor Rev. Dale Young, 226-A Dixon St., Porcupine, ON P0N 1C0; 705-235-0855; northerndaisy942.dy@gmail.com.

Kingston, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Karen Bach; 613-929-3693; karen.bach@utoronto.ca.

Kitchener, Calvin; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. J. Mark Lewis, 54 Queen St. N., Kitchener, ON N2H 2H2; 519-578-4430; revmarklewis@gmail.com.

Kitchener, Doon; Interim Moderator Rev. Kees Vandermey; 519-698-0300; rmvandermey@gmail.com.

Markham, Markham Chinese; Full-time associate minister for English-speaking ministry; Interim Moderator Rev. Sam Priestley, 19 Elm Lea St., Markham, ON L3P 3M8; 905-294-1633; sam.priestley@bell.net.

Mount Forest, St. Andrew's and Conn, Knox; Interim Moderator Rev. Andrew Apack Song, 51 Church St., Elora, ON N0B 1S0; 519-846-0680 (church) or 519-846-8028 (home); andrewapack@gmail.com.

Nottawa, Emmanuel; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Heather Malnick, 206 Murphy Rd., Baxter, ON L0M 1B1; 705-424-0779; livingfaithbaxter@gmail.com.

Oro, Trinity Community; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Jim Sitler, 1003 Cherish Creek Lane, RR 3, Bracebridge, ON P1L 1X1; 705-645-5650; cherishcreek@sympatico.ca.

Oshawa, Knox; Interim Moderator Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith, c/o Burns Presbyterian Church, 765 Myrtle Rd. W., Ashburn, ON L0B 1A0; 905-925-6346; jeremy@burnschurch.org.

Whitby, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Alexander Wilson, 17 Colonial Ave., Scarborough, ON M2M 2C3; 416-431-0841 (church) or 647-501-0632 (cell); st.stephens.scarborough@gmail.com.

SYNOD OF SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

Bayfield, Knox; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. John Henderson, PO Box 824, Exeter, ON N0M 1S6; 519-235-2608; henderson.johncharles@gmail.com.

Brantford, Alexandra; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Chris Little, 64 Blandford St., PO Box 99, Innerkip, ON N0J 1M0; 519-469-3904; clittle@execulink.com.

Burlington, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Robert Docherty, c/o Knox Presbyterian Church, 461 Elizabeth St., Burlington, ON L7R 4B1; 905-333-3013; revbob.docherty@gmail.com.

Dundas, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Tom Billard, 1901 8th Concession W., RR 1, Cambridge, ON N1R 5S2; 519-621-3023; tcbillard@rogers.com.

Fingal, Knox; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Kevin Steeper; 519-438-3492; ksteeper@elmwoodchurch.ca.

Lucknow and South Kinloss; Full-time; Interim Moderator Mark Davidson; 519-924-1537; m.mark.davidson@hotmail.com.

Meaford, Knox; Part-time minister, 75 per cent; Interim Moderator Rev. Peggy Kipfer; 519-599-6645; peggykipfer@gmail.com.

Stoney Creek, Heritage Green; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Charmain Sebestyen; csebestyen@shaw.ca.

Windsor, University Community Church; beginning July 1, 2013; Interim Moderator Rev. Wendy Paterson; paulinmemorial@on.aibn.com.

SYNOD OF MANITOBA AND NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

Brandon, Man., St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Dong-Ha Kim, 35 Aurora Cres., Brandon, MB R7B 4G4; 204-727-5874; donghafpc@mymts.net.

Thunder Bay, Ont., First; Minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bert Vancook, First Presbyterian Church, 639 Grey St., Thunder Bay, ON P7E 2E4; 807-623-0717; first@tbaytel.net.

Thunder Bay, Ont., St. Andrew's; Full time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Harold Hunt; revhunt@me.com.

SYNOD OF SASKATCHEWAN

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PRESBYTERIAN
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Obituaries

Leitch, Donald "Edwin," who was born on June 13, 1929 passed away peacefully at the age of 83 on April 10, 2013. Ed was the beloved husband of Ruth for 59 years and loving father of Donald (Gail) and Jeananne (Steven). He was the cherished grandfather of Ailsa, Anika and Aislinn. He was a retired principal with the Lambton County Board of Education.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada meant a great deal to Ed. Elected as an elder in 1972, he became the clerk of session of St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Sarnia, Ont., in 1976 and served as clerk for 37 years until his death. In June of 1993, Ed became the moderator of the Presbytery of Lambton West-Middlesex, the first lay person to moderate any of our church courts. As clerk of session, representative elder to presbytery, moderator of presbytery, commissioner to General Assembly and as a member of numerous church committees, Ed always gave wise counsel. Despite his failing health over the last year of his life, Ed continued to take an active interest in the life and work of St. Giles and of the presbytery.

As his minister, Rev. Barry Van Dusen said at his funeral, "Ed was a good and decent man and a man of a deep and real faith. If only Ed could bequeath a portion of his faith and hope and commitment to the church, what a difference that would make and what renewal it would bring. You have fought the good fight, you have kept the faith, you have finished the race. In the words of Jesus, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'"

Young, Gwendolyn Susanne, a longtime member of Paterson Memorial Presbyterian Church in Sarnia, Ont., died four days after her 92nd birthday on April 1, 2013 at Strathroy Middlesex Hospital in Strathroy-Caradoc. She was predeceased by her husband, Rev. George H. Young, former minister at Paterson. The service was conducted by Rev. Allan Farris at Paterson on April 11, 2013. Surviving Gwen are two daughters, Janet (Ken) Fleet of Kilworth, Ont., and Mary (John) Smibert of London, Ont.; five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. ■

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A View from St. Andrews

JOHN KNOX AS A YOUNG MAN. **BY CONNIE WARDLE**

From July 6 to 22, 2012, Connie Wardle participated in a pilgrimage through countries touched by the Protestant Reformation— France, Switzerland and Scotland. This is the seventh of a series of reflections on the journey.

John Knox's life is the stuff of historical television dramas—full of murder, politics and ecclesiastical power struggles. I always imagined him as an older man, bristling and fierce, preaching from some high pulpit or fighting over doctrine with Mary, Queen of Scots.

I rarely pictured him as a young man. Yet as I wandered through the cobblestone streets of St. Andrews, past the ruins of the cathedral and the castle on the coast of the North Sea, I imagined a young academic, passionate about new theological ideas, full of loyalty and foolhardy courage, and, as events turned against him, deep grief.

Knox lived during a time of political turmoil. In the 1530s, King Henry VIII of England created a church independent of Rome and the Pope; in Scotland, where there was little love for England, the court pushed the opposite way and reaffirmed its support for the pontiff. Thus, those who spread the ideas of the Protestant Reformation were seen as supporters of England as well as religious heretics. French interests also came into play; the Scottish King James V married a French noblewoman, Mary of Guise, in 1536. The king died six years later and their infant daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots, ➤

Ruins of St. Andrews Cathedral, Scotland.

ascended the throne.

We know little about John Knox's childhood. As a young man he was educated. We know he had great respect for George Wishart, a fellow Scot and a promoter of Reformation ideas. I imagine he was a mentor to young Knox. And Knox, armed with a two-handed sword, saw himself as Wishart's bodyguard and companion.

But the powerful archbishop of St. Andrews, Cardinal David Beaton, was no friend to Wishart or others who called for an evangelical Reformation. Beaton ordered Wishart's arrest in 1546.

John Knox was with Wishart on the night he was arrested. The young man was willing to follow his teacher to prison and, perhaps, to martyrdom. "Nay," Wishart allegedly said to him. "One is sufficient for a sacrifice."

Wishart was imprisoned in St. Andrews Castle, where Cardinal Beaton lived. He was convicted of heretical teaching and was burned at the stake outside its walls.

Two months later, the Cardinal was assassinated and his body hung from one of the windows. Supporters of Protestantism and English agents occupied the castle. And John Knox joined them.

It wasn't for long. In July of 1547, a fleet of French ships appeared off the coast. They bombarded the castle and the band of rebels was forced to surrender.

Knox was taken prisoner, and thus began his life as a galley slave. He was chained to an oar on a French ship and, his biographer Thomas M'Crie tells us, he was "treated with all the indignities offered to heretics, in addition to the rigors of ordinary captivity." I can imagine aching muscles and sunburned skin, youthful optimism turning into the ache of loss. I can imagine him whispering Psalm 130 beneath his breath.

Perhaps that was why Knox seemed fierce and stubborn. Perhaps he was left with only faith and conviction, and he wielded these like his old two-handed sword.

Knox spent 19 months as a prisoner. In 1549, he was set free. It would be a decade before he returned to Scotland.

Today St. Andrews is better known for its world famous golf course than its murders and martyrs. Yet the ruins of the castle continue to brood by the edge of the sea, telling their grim stories of faith, power and violence. ■

Connie Wardle is the Record's *staff writer.*

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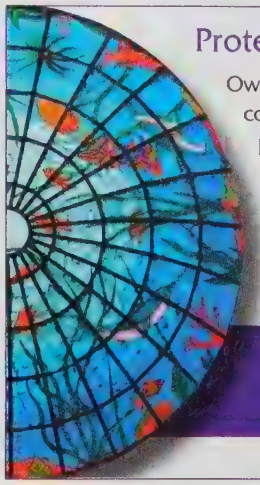

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ECCLESIASTICAL

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Trapped in my sin, I needed someone who knew the sweetness of the gospel first-hand to bring it to me

A few weeks later, Linda came storming into the house. "That bushytailed, fleabag rodent!"

"What's the matter, hon?" I said, not looking up from my book.

"It's that stupid red squirrel of yours," she said. "I went to pull some sweet beets from the garden—some nice big ones, too. I have been waiting all summer to cook them up and he has eaten all the beets halfway through, right at the ground level. The green tops are all still intact and the taproot, too, but over half the beet is missing in the middle. I could murder that flea-bitten, loud-mouthed rodent!"

"Oh, that's really too bad, hon," I said. The door slammed before I could show more of my genuine, heartfelt concern.

A week or two later, early in the morning, the back door slammed and Linda hollered: "You gotta come and see this." I threw back the covers and padded towards the kitchen. Linda was out on the veranda in her PJs pointing incredulously at the box of beautiful, big, ripe, sweet peaches that we had just picked up from the Okanogan the day before. The drive home to the Cariboo was about five hours long and we were dead tired when we arrived. We put the box of peaches on the veranda in the wrought iron swing chair until the next day when Linda was planning on firing up the canner and putting up several quarts of delicious peaches to sweeten our long, cold winter.

"Look what that squirrel did!" Linda said. "He has eaten at least a dozen of our peaches, taken a huge bite out of each one. I feed him nuts all winter and this is the thanks I get. That blighter. I really ought to cook his butt and tan his hide. And after that, you can shoot him."

"You know, I don't think it is the squirrel," I said. "It just turned daylight and we didn't get home until late last night. Red squirrels aren't noted for nocturnal activity. I think it's something else. And look at the size of the teeth marks left in the peaches. It's something way bigger than a red squirrel."

That night, after canning peaches all day, Linda put the remnant of the half-eaten peaches back on the swing chair. In the middle of the night she tiptoed out to the veranda and ambushed the perpetrator with her flashlight. "You dirty rat!" she said, just like James Cagney.

And that's what it was: a huge pack rat, almost three times the size of our red squirrel. In fact, it was almost as big as our neighbour's fat cat, who apparently has an aversion to hunting rats. When I went down to my storage shed, which I still hadn't cleaned out, I could smell the putrid stench of rat spray all over the place. The bunch of birch branches bundled into the attic really was a rat's nest. And there was more than one rat, too; our traps later proved that.

It turns out that "dirty rats" are attracted by sweet summer peaches, and sweet beets, and as we later found out, sweet onions, too. Put something as sweet as summer peaches out where there are rats and you are going to get rats. And it seems to me that this is the first lesson of Christian evangelism.

There is sweetness in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some of us can confess to knowing this sweetness first-hand, for we are all too aware of having come to Christ from the nest of "dirty rats." As rat sinners, we know first-hand what separation from God is like. We know the stink and desperation and death that's in our sin. It's a very personal thing for us, a very sweet and personal thing, this gospel of Jesus Christ. Martin Luther is quoted as saying: "The sweetness of the gospel lies mostly in pronouns, as me, my, thy. 'Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' 'Christ Jesus my Lord.' 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.'" For the self-aware sinner, the gospel of Jesus is deeply personal and as sweet as summer peaches.

And that's how the gospel must be proclaimed if it is going to attract rat sinners—the likes of me. Trapped in my sin, I needed someone who knew the sweetness of the gospel first-hand to bring it to me. Rat sinners like me hardly ever get into church to hear about it. You have to take the sweetness of the gospel to where the rats live. You have to get it out there. When I reflect upon it, the fact that I came to know the sweetness of God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ at all seems a miracle. I would never have gone to church to find it. And there wasn't a whole lot of churchgoers coming to me with it. The miracle was that I got sick with cancer and a faithful old Presbyterian catechist preacher, who was also a cancer survivor, found me out and sought me out. He came to me with his love and concern and the sweet good news of God's love and forgiveness, freely given in Jesus. Incarnate in him, the gospel was as sweet as summer peaches. And rat that I was ... well I am telling you this story, so I guess the conclusion is forgone. ■

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of several books.

As Sweet as Summer Peaches

TAKING THE GOSPEL TO THE 'DIRTY RAT.'

BY DAVID WEBBER ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY FALLS

"That good for nothing, conniving, interfering bushytailed bigmouthed chatterbox!"

"What on earth has got you so stoked?" Linda asked.

"It's that stupid squirrel," I said as I stormed into the house and headed past her directly for the biffey.

"Is Squirrelly not playing nice with you again, dear?" Linda smiled as I breezed by.

"Well, I mean really. He just creates more work for me every time I turn around. And I am not getting any younger, ya know," I bellowed through the closed door. I punctuated this with a satisfying Archie Bunker flush and stomped back into the front room feeling somewhat better but every bit as ticked off.

"Remember all those prunings that I left on the ground last night from the birch tree? Well that idiot red squirrel of yours picked the whole lot of them up, packed them clear across the lawn and stuffed them in the attic of my lumber storage shed. It's jam-packed with about three bushels of birch branches now. It's going to take hours for me to clean that rat's nest up."

"Oh, that's too bad," Linda said, a tad dismissively I thought.

continued on page 49

"Our unity in Christ is a spiritual reality, yes. But it is tangible, earthy, and it is lived in relationship day by day in the midst of struggle and suffering and strife, in the midst of challenge and change."

—REV. DR. JOHN VISSERS,
GENERAL ASSEMBLY SERMON

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SEPTEMBER 2013

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Interview with Samantha Nutt

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Facebook has us posting pictures of ourselves when we look our absolute best. Food blogs look delicious but do the recipes really live up? Does anyone care? After all, we spend our time looking at Pinterest instead of making something that we could enjoy in person.

Life for Jesus was about more than food and clothing. Life was about the experience. Life was what you made of it. If you're feeling the pressure to live a Pinterest worthy life, don't. Jesus didn't and neither should you. It's not how things look, it's who you are that counts.

—Becky Roushorne-Lau, From Ministry to Motherhood, presbyterianrecord.ca

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PRESBYTERIAN
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PRESBYTERIAN RECORD

SEPTEMBER 2013

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First Thoughts

FOR THE RECORD

Written in Data

Churches need statistical information to rebuild. By David Harris

"We want information..."

That was the theme behind a short-lived British TV spy series in the mid-60s. Today, the church needs information as badly as any intelligence agency ever has and it is as vital to the denomination's survival as anything found by spies.

The kind of information I'm talking about is not exactly secret, but it does take some work to uncover it.

What we need are sophisticated demographics that give a picture of the catchment area for a congregation. This wouldn't be needed for every congregation in the church—no offence, but small rural churches are rarely more than that—however, urban and suburban churches frequently find themselves in a swirl of change.

What were once WASP enclaves have transformed into any number of ethnic landing pads for a latest wave of immigrants, usually not of Presbyterian persuasion.

A Presbyterian congregation that finds itself in the middle of a large Hindu or Sikh community is going to be challenged to survive.

Not surprisingly, the denomination is looking for success stories to boost morale and give people ideas. Several such stories were highlighted at this year's General Assembly. They were all fascinating good news stories.

Unfortunately, a detailed description of each congregation was missing. Without far more data than was presented, it was impossible to determine what were the most important factors in each congregation's revival and whether their success would be replicable.

If a church is surviving primarily because a developer gave them a million dollars for land or air rights, there is little that can be repeated in churches that are not in that kind of situation. What the congregation does with the money will be interesting and important, but that's it.

The real question is why more denominations are not investing in this kind of research. To be sure, it won't be cheap, but neither is the impact of declining financial resources and poorly deployed ministry leaders.

Consider the retail world we participate in daily. From grocery stores to gas stations to the battle of the big box stores, retailers either pay close attention to the demographics of their outlets or they lose business and fold.

Growing congregations are doing so by paying attention (sometimes by luck) to their demographics—or they have an attractional leader.

There is a reluctance in the church to acknowledge this phenomenon, preferring to see preaching skills or a theological perspective to explain a sudden revival.

Often, however, the answer is mostly due to a young, usually male (when will this change, O Lord?) minister. If said minister has a young family, all the better: there's the makings of a Sunday school reboot with guaranteed attendance.

It may seem unfairly mundane that parking lots are among the most important features of congregational success. And that's just a fraction of the data the denomination needs to gather and take note of as churches are closed, rebuilt or planted.

Denominational decline is not written in stone. But revival may well be written in data.

David Harris is the Record's *publisher and editor.*

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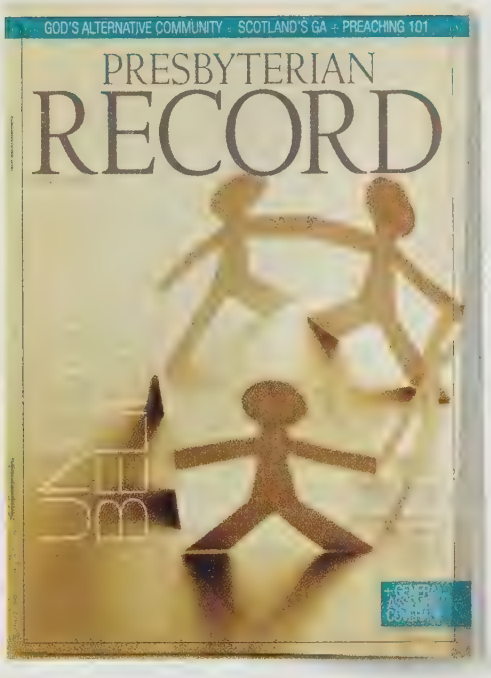


Varying Perspectives

Re Love One Another, July/August

As an elder who attended this year's General Assembly, my opinion differs from those expressed in the article about Pandit Roopnauth Sharma's address. For me, along with the "Good News Stories," Mr. Sharma's address was the highlight of the assembly. Prior to this meeting, I was not aware that the Presbyterian Church had an interfaith mandate which encourages us to build an understanding and relationship with other faith traditions and I was delighted to learn about this. Then when I realized that Mr. Sharma had been invited to speak both about the Hindu faith and the concerns and hopes that they have as we live together in Canada, I was again delighted. I was proud that the organizers of the General Assembly had the courage and insight to do this. I appreciated learning more about the Hindu faith and lifestyle and admired Mr. Sharma's honesty. I encourage everyone to read the entire address on the *Presbyterian Record*'s website as I do not believe that the excerpt did it justice. Regardless of how you feel about the address, I believe we need to continue reaching out to other faiths. We need to listen, learn, share and continue this dialogue. My prayer is that at the next General Assembly, another guest from another faith will be invited to speak.

ANN MARIE LORENZ, MISSISSAUGA, ONT.

Somebody should tell Pandit Sharma to whine less and to learn more before engaging in interfaith "dialogue." Liberal democracy is premised on the robust expression of diverse views, opinions and convictions. We accept a distinction between persuasion and coercion. Robust persuasion is the stuff of democratic life; coercion is out of bounds.

"If you respect us, then do not attempt to convert us to what you believe in. Because that is the highest form of disrespect, when you tell me what I believe in is not good and only what you believe in is the best." This gets it absolutely backwards. It is because I respect another as a human being made in the image of God that I would take the time and trouble to persuade them of the truth revealed in Jesus Christ insofar as I am capable of it.

The pandit doesn't seem to have figured out yet what it means to live in a democratic society. In the free market place of religious conviction here in Canada, citizens need to develop ›

continued

thicker skins, quit playing the victim card and think about how their faith can contribute to the public good/human flourishing.

What sort of faith is it that refuses to come to the light of rational discussion?

If the pandit had addressed that question, and if there had been time for a Q&A period, GA's time might have been spent more productively.

BARRY MACK, ONLINE

I want to thank both Pandit Sharma and Rev. Fraser for their statements that appeared in the July/August issue. Juxtaposed, the two very different positions create a case study that Christians, particularly in North America, very seldom experience. Sharma enabled us to be on the receiving end of someone sharing his faith—and it wasn't Christianity. Fraser's expression of anger allowed us to feel the anger that many followers of other religions experience when we share Christianity with them. Too often we forget that Christian missionaries—no matter how sensitive we are to others—are sharing our faith with people of other faiths. They may well feel that we are belittling and mocking their faith as we talk about Jesus.

I do want to respond to one of Fraser's comments, however. He felt that Sharma was making a joke when he asked, "what about those who lived before Christ?" Far from being a joke, this is a major concern for many. North Americans tend to be very individualistic but other peoples tend to emphasize the community. We will never know how many people rejected Christianity because they wanted to go to wherever their parents and grandparents had gone after death. I do know of one Hindu who converted to Christianity not because of Jesus, but because his wife had been a Christian and he wanted to go to where she went after she died.

The juxtaposition of the two statements allowed us to experience a moment of humility, and a lesson that we need to learn. Thank you again to both Pandit Sharma and Rev. Fraser for teaching us.

CHERYL GAVER, OAKVILLE, ONT.

For more on this subject, visit presbyterianrecord.ca to read a reflection by the principal clerk and the convener of the ecumenical and interfaith relations committee.

Church as Community

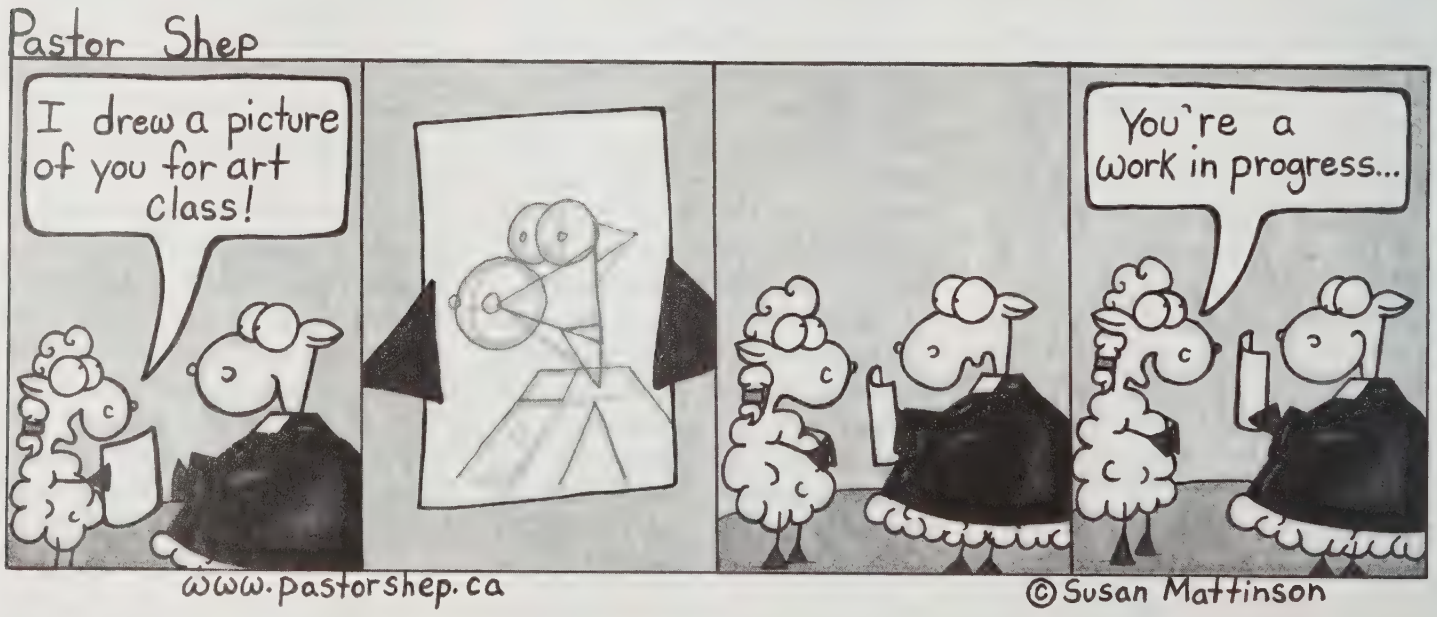
Re A Safe Place to Share, July/August

Having grown up in the Christian Reformed Church and now a member of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, this story of the tragic death of Tim Bosma strikes close to home. One of the hardest parts of leaving the CRC is the sense of community the denomination brings. I know that Sharlene Bosma will be held up by the community in the future and that is a comfort. The Presbyterian Church has not provided the same sense of community for me. Not sure how that can change (if in fact it can). I do know that for some, the CRC/Dutch immigrant experience can be overwhelming but in circumstances such as these when a terrible tragedy occurs, the church community will provide solace to the grieving.

RICK OUDYK, ONLINE

Jeff, you hit the nail on the head. Our strength is in the Lord but His presence is felt through the network of believers world wide—one holy, catholic church! Thank you for putting this good news into words.

KELLY, ONLINE



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God's Kingdom

Re Incarnate, Visible Communities, July/August

I was intrigued when I saw the caption God's Alternative Community on the *Record*'s front cover and was gratified to find that I concurred unreservedly with Dr. Ervine's and Lesslie Newbigin's belief that God's kingdom "touches the ground right now" in congregations. I am sure that we Presbyterians are all working very hard to make that theological truth something that is visible to the communities that surround our congregations.

KATHLEEN GIBSON, TORONTO

Cookies from Clergy

This is to share with you how blessed we feel to have called Rev. Bruce Kemp to our three-point charge of Chesterville, Morewood and Winchester, Ont. We've been without a full-time minister for a lengthy period of time. And although I honestly think that one would have to be crazy to take on a three-point charge, we are thankful that Kemp felt called (and that he's a bit crazy)!

What I really want to tell you is that this man not only bakes but on his first visit to our home, he actually brought homemade oatmeal raisin cookies to my husband, having heard that they were Tom's favourite. I'm wondering if this is a first? Is there anybody out there who has had homemade cookies delivered by your minister?

Now I wonder when I might see my favourite... Bruce: that would be chocolate chip.

JANET CLAPP, WINCHESTER, ONT.

Expressing Gratitude

Re The Cost of Discipleship, May

It is a well-known fact that many brave Dutch families sheltered Jewish people during World War II. Also, the Dutch people are still grateful for the help they received to liberate them from this war. The Netherlands has done much to make this a better world.

RALPH FORSHAW, NANAIMO, B.C

Lost in Church Words

Re Servants of the Word, July/August

Good Presbyterian advice! Don't be easily satisfied. Don't settle. You can picture a Presbyterian minister in some cold church in Scotland facing pews full of glowers.

The audience expects the text and main theme up front, followed by well thought out points and explanations that proclaim the Kingdom of God in practical terms that they can live out in their lives.

Disconnected beating about the bush for most of the sermon or article with a few comfort words at the end gives you the Word lost in church words.

ANDREW MITCHELL, ONLINE

ONLINE EXTRA
Let the conversation continue at presbyterianrecord.ca

100 YEARS
ehm
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Urgently needed items the Fall

Clothing Items:
New socks and underwear for both men and women, t-shirts, running shoes for men and women, blue jeans, sweat pants.

Personal Necessities:
Disposable razors, deodorant, sunscreen, feminine products, toothpaste and toothbrushes, individual packages of tissues, hairbrushes and combs, small containers of shampoo and conditioner.

Food and Kitchen Items:
Powdered milk, plastic kitchen utensils, sweetener, plastic wrap, aluminum foil, paper plates, pasta, rice, peanut butter, pasta sauce, and all canned food.

Miscellaneous:
Canadian Tire Money, gift certificates, Tim Horton gift cards, school supplies and art supplies, TTC tokens – Adult, Seniors and Students

Thank you so much for your support. You have helped to bring hope into many people's lives.

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POP CHRISTIANITY

A Mausoleum to Christendom

A tourist's view of Westminster Abbey. By Andrew Faiz

Walking through Westminster Abbey, London, I felt like I was in an episode of *Hoarders*, a disturbing television documentary series. I was in a funk within five minutes; unbearably depressed within half an hour. Here was a towering tribute to something that grew up in Christ's name but didn't seem to have much to do with Christ.

Every square inch of floor and wall, so it seems, is covered with a plaque, a grave, a statue, a monument of florid tributes and forever blessings on kings, queens, civil servants and many others who have served, as the Abbey's website calls it, "the unique pageant of British history."

Perhaps the Abbey itself is a mausoleum to Christendom. As much as it claims on its literature and on its website that it is a "living church," and there is daily worship someplace in the massive complex, it is the thousand-year history that is the true attraction. Particularly its association with the monarchy. "The coronation of kings and queens has taken place here since 1066, and many of the nation's kings and queens are buried in the Abbey," writes the dean on the website.

Folks line up for a half an hour or more and pay £18 to see the over 3,000 memorials whitewashed by the corporeal powers of church and state. Take for example the story of Elizabeth I and her warring cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, now forever united in the Lady Chapel. They had spent their lives trying to kill each other, and it was Mary's son, Charles who placed his mother within the Abbey. It makes a pretty good metaphor for Christendom; the church cleansing the crown, the crown commissioning the church. That dipsydoodle alone is worth $30.

I like the times we are in, where our faith is again a challenge, and not a balm, to society at large, to power in particular

I don't mean to malign Westminster Abbey; just that these thoughts bubbled during my visit there. Many churches in our own denomination might also be considered mausoleums to a faded past. A past for which I have heard many yearn.

As Westminster Abbey shows it was really the power for which we are nostalgic. But, like all such histories it was deeply compromised. Christendom existed in a symbiotic relationship with the State; does the Church really need to bless Gen. Wolfe or Shakespeare?

There is worship at Westminster but it is a sideshow. Displays of power, earthly glory, are the central attraction, down the main alleys of the 2,972 square metres. And that, in many ways, is how I think of Christendom: A spiritually compromised power structure.

I try not to think these thoughts too loud, too often, for the abiding fear of sounding naïve. But, and while I'm not studied in this I have read some over the years, isn't this exactly what Christ warned against, on numerous occasions?

I like the times we are in, where our faith is again a challenge, and not a balm, to society at large, to power in particular. Or so I would like to think, though it hardly seems we (and particularly our denomination) challenge either society or power at all. (Sending finger-wagging letters is passive-aggressive at best.) We are sidelined from the centre aisle of society. That's a prophetic position to be in. And perhaps that is the best metaphor coming from Westminster Abbey today. After all, can you think of a more un-Christ-like phrase than Christendom?

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *managing editor.*

BULLETIN

Community and world news

Children at Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School c. 1950-1953

PHOTO: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA ARCHIVES

'Chilling and Painful'

Food historian describes nutrition experiments at residential schools. By Connie Wardle

Aboriginal children in six residential schools across the country, including one run by the Presbyterian Church, were subjects in nutrition experiments in the 1940s and 50s, a food historian has revealed.

"Ian Mosby's paper is chilling and painful to read," says a statement issued by the Presbyterian Church. "These nutritional experiments were carried out without the knowledge and consent of the affected communities and the parents whose children attended residential school."

In the wake of the Second World War, official investigations showed food service was "overwhelmingly poor" and many children were malnourished in residential schools, the postdoctoral fellow at the University of Guelph wrote in the journal *Histoire sociale/Social History*. Government grants were not sufficient to provide foods that would meet the children's basic nutritional requirements, yet "the official response was not to increase these grants immediately, but instead to launch further investigations."

In a five-year study that began in 1948, researchers examined how a different type of dietary intervention at each of six schools affected the health of students.

One of the schools was Cecilia Jeffrey in Kenora, Ont., one of two residential schools that remained the responsibility of the Presbyterian Church after the United Church was created in 1925.

Some forms of dental care were also denied to students for the duration of the study, since tooth decay and gingivitis "are both important factors in assessing nutritional status," the chief of the dental health division wrote in 1949.

Vivian Ketchum's mother attended St. Mary's, a Catholic-run residential school in Kenora. It was one

.... continued

of the schools used for the experiments.

As children, Ketchum and her siblings attended Cecilia Jeffrey, as did her father before her.

Ketchum said she felt angry and disgusted when she learned about the experiments. "The thought of my mum as a child being used as a guinea pig was kind of sad," she said. "My mum was a very respected person as she got older. It was the future elders, future respected leaders that they were doing this to."

"As Presbyterians, we need to be honest about the fact that this is a part of our own history since aspects of these experiments took place in Cecilia Jeffery, one of the schools we ran," said Stephen Kendall, the church's principal clerk and the chair of the Ecumenical Working Group on Residential Schools. "That calls us to understand the truth of what happened and seek reconciliation from those who were affected by it."

Ketchum agrees. In her work with the church's healing and reconciliation committee, she urged people set aside their books and notes, sit in a circle together and listen with their hearts.

"The bottom line is—maybe that's why I shared my experience and why I talk so much about this—I want people not to see us as residential school survivors but as people," she said.

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s staff writer.*

Children at Camp d'action biblique.

PHOTO: CAMP D'ACTION BIBLIQUE

Free Camp for Lac-Mégantic Kids

Weeks after their town was devastated by a train derailment and explosion that killed 47 people, eight children and teenagers from Lac-Mégantic were offered a gift: a free week at camp.

Camp d'action biblique is a bilingual camp owned and operated by the Presbytery of Quebec. It is about an hour and a half drive from Lac-Mégantic.

After the disaster on July 6, the camp flew its flags at half-mast. The kids created a banner saying 'thinking of you, Lac-Mégantic.' And Randy Johnston, the camp director, suggested to the camp committee that they help some kids from the town get away for a week of fun.

"We thought we'd put the idea out there and go on faith," he said.

Contributions from individuals and churches provided enough for 12 children and youth to attend camp for free. Although the 12 "camperships" were filled, four of the participants didn't show up for their respective weeks of camp in early August.

If support continues, Johnston said the camp plans to provide camperships for children and teens from Lac-Mégantic next summer, as it will be the first anniversary of the disaster. —*Connie Wardle*

GIFT FOR KNOX COLLEGE HONOURS 160 YEARS OF MINISTRY

The congregation of West Adelaide, Kerwood, Ont., is living out its commitment to mission with a $100,000 donation to the chair of pastoral theology at Knox College, Toronto.

The gift is a living legacy for West Adelaide—honouring their church's 160 years of worship and service. At a service and reception on April 14, two Knox representatives, Rev. Dr. Pamela McCarroll and Lisa Watson, accepted the cheque from Rev. Larry Amiro, minister of Knox, Centre Road (part of West Adelaide's two-point charge), and members of West Adelaide's session.

In an email, Amiro told the *Record* that, "the bulk of the donation came from the legacy of John MacKenzie, a longtime elder and staunch supporter of our church."

Historically, West Adelaide had contributed in excess of three times its suggested allocation for Presbyterians Sharing. "At one annual congregational meeting, when it appeared our local budget was showing a deficit, I suggested that perhaps we could cut back on mission givings and increase

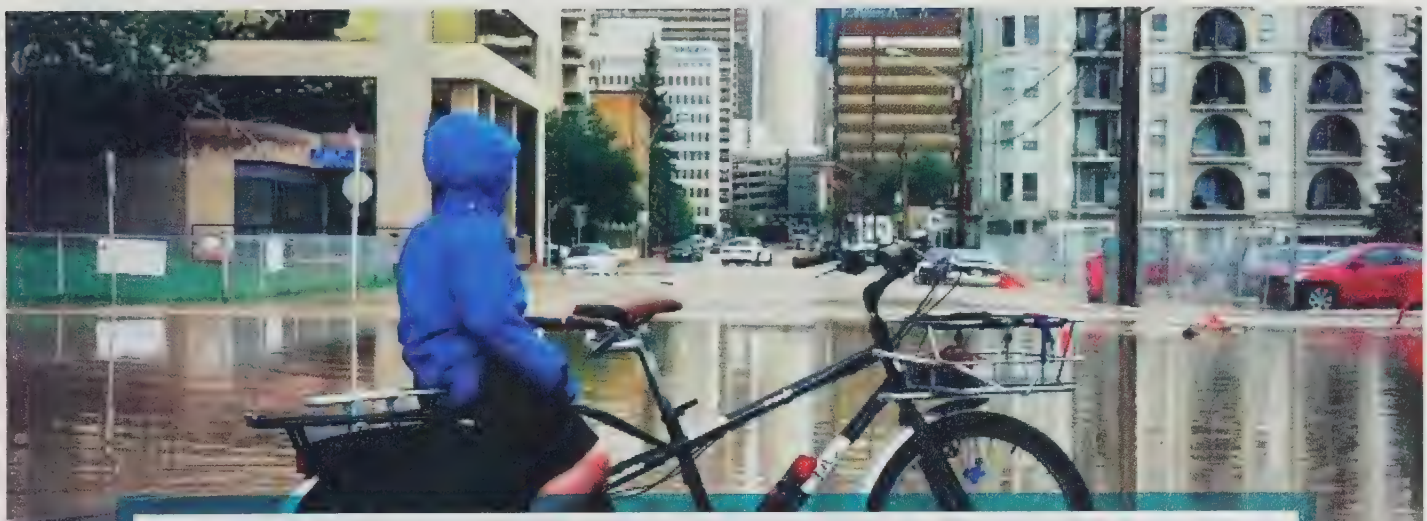

PHOTO: ROB TAYLOR

FAITH IN THE FLOOD

Ministers and churches support communities in Alberta.

By Connie Wardle

Rev. Drew Burnand arrived in High River, Alta., days after June's devastating flood almost washed it away.

He said it was like "something out of a sci-fi movie." The streets were deserted and coated with thick mud. Train tracks were twisted. Asphalt was rippled.

The town was the hardest hit when a deluge on June 20 caused rivers to swell and sewer systems to back up.

As a volunteer chaplain for the RCMP in Red Deer, Burnand was called in to offer spiritual and emotional care to officers. And as people returned to face the damage done to their homes, he offered support and prayers.

Three people were killed by the floodwaters in High River and most residents faced the loss of material things.

"When people face calamity," Bernand said, "you get the best or the worst."

As people began to pick up the pieces, he said he saw many of them "rising to the occasion."

In other towns and cities hit by the floods, Presbyterian ministers and lay leaders called everyone in their congregations to make sure they were okay. And members pitched in where and how they could, providing food, rides and helping hands.

"I think a lot of it was old fashioned, on-the-ground ministry," said Rev. Clay Kuhn, minister at St. Paul's, Banff.

"We're a church that's old enough not to have a lot of sweat equity," said Rev. Dr. Nancy Cocks, minister at St. John's, Medicine Hat. She said the church was taking up collections to provide financial support.

Many churches opted to support agencies like Samaritan's Purse, which launched the largest Canadian disaster response in its history. Presbyterian World Service and Development also accepted donations for Alberta flood relief.

"The volunteer response within the city was dramatic and immediate by all kinds of organizations and all kinds of individuals," said Rev. Dr. Jean Morris, pastoral care minister at Grace, Calgary.

Flooding in the city's downtown reached the basement of Calvin Hungarian, but nearby Grace escaped unscathed.

Grace's ministers and lay leaders decided to support organizations that were already working to clean up the city. They posted links about volunteering on the church's website and co-ordinated volunteers who wanted to help members whose homes had been flooded.

In late July, Morris also spent a day in High River as a volunteer chaplain with Samaritan's Purse.

"People mentioned so many times the power of community and generosity and compassion they had experienced," she said. "We heard that story over and over again."

Connie Wardle is the Record's *staff writer.*

Visit ***presbyterianrecord.ca*** *for reflections on the flood in Calgary by Len Wolstenholme and Mary Rozsa de Coquet.*

givings to our local needs. John's response was adamant that missions were important and that 'the Lord would provide' for our local needs," said Amiro.

While the congregation will be celebrating its 160th anniversary this month, it has decided that because of declining attendance, the age of the members (many of whom are over 90) and financial shortfalls, it will close at the end of September. —*AM and Knox College*

Religious Minorities on the Rise

Pew Research Center analysis of Canadian census and survey data finds that more Canadians belong to minority faiths than ever before. In addition, the number of Canadians with no religious affiliation has been rising and attendance at religious services has been dropping.

Two-thirds of Canadians (including adults and children) identify either as Catholic or as Protestant, but both Christian groups have seen substantial erosion in their shares of the Canadian public, according to the analysis by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life. The percentage of Canadians who identify as Catholic has dropped from 47 per cent to 39 per cent over the last four decades, while the share that identifies as Protestant has fallen even more steeply, from 41 per cent to 27 per cent.

Concurrently, the number of Canadians who belong to other religions—including Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Judaism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity—is growing. Collectively, these smaller religious groups account for more than one-in-10 Canadians (11 per cent) as of 2011, up from not quite one-in-20 (four per cent) in 1981.

The number of Canadians who do not identify with any religion has been rising rapidly, going from four per cent in 1971 to nearly a quarter in 2011. Visit pewforum.org for the full survey. *—The Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life*

RUNNING FOR PWS&D

Presbyterian World Service and Development is participating in the 2013 Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon for the second year in a row. Last year, Presbyterians in Canada helped raise $12,000 for PWS&D programs. This year, the goal is to raise another $10,000. Runners can sign up as part of PWS&D's team, while those who don't want to physically participate can donate in support of the runners.

Families or congregations can participate together, with children welcome to run or walk the 5K. The marathon takes place Oct. 20.

To find out more, or to donate, contact Emily Vandermeer by email at evandermeer@presbyterian.ca or call 1-800-619-7301 ext. 293. *—PWS&D*

ECUMENIST RETIRES

After 26 years of faithful involvement in local ecumenical activity, Douglas Mitchell is retiring. An elder at St. Andrew's, Lethbridge, Alta., Mitchell was deeply involved in the work of Kairos, a social justice organization and PCC partner.

A veterinarian by trade, Mitchell has travelled extensively, spending two and a half years in Indonesia.

"The ethnic and religious diversity of peoples prompted me to join Kairos," Mitchell told the *Record*. "I'm sorry to give it up. I had many interesting times with the committee."

The list of his work within the church is lengthy, including serving on PWS&D's national committee, the Knox College senate, the international affairs committee, his congregation's mission and outreach committee, and as a representative elder to presbytery. While retiring from ecumenical activity in Lethbridge, 88-year-old Mitchell will be involved with a local environmental group committed to working with the municipal government on environmental sustainability education.

Mitchell's reason for being so involved in the work of the church is charmingly simple: "I did it because I had some background and training and experience, which motivated me to connect with these various groups."

"Doug Mitchell has been an extraordinary voice for justice and of conscience for many years," said Rick Fee, general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency. "He was a respectful and diligent team member who could be relied upon in every instance. He stands out for those unique qualities which he brought to the church and which he exercised so very well wherever he was asked to serve." *—AM*

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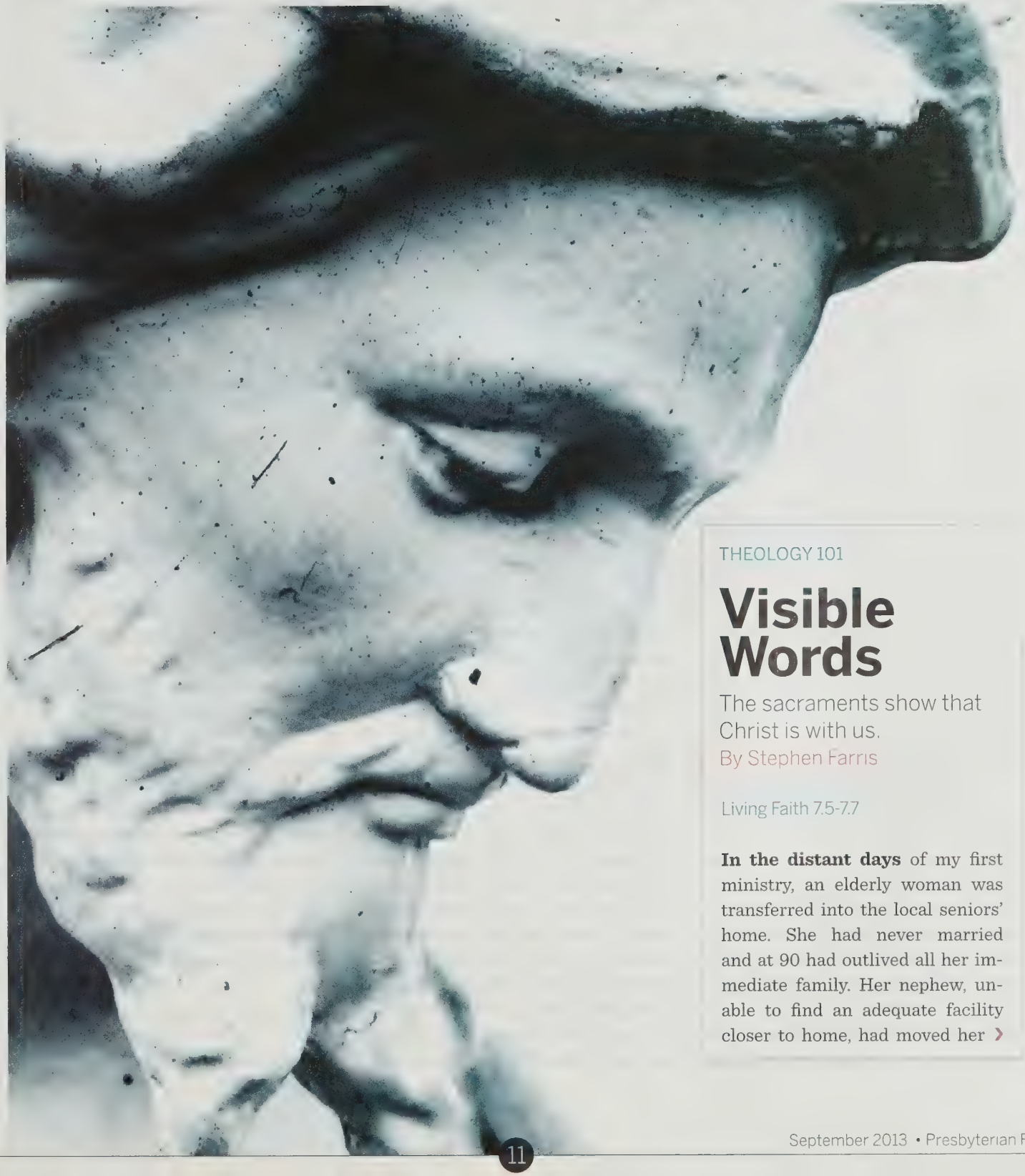
Faith.

Deepening your relationship with God



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THEOLOGY 101

Visible Words

The sacraments show that Christ is with us.

By Stephen Farris

Living Faith 7.5-7.7

In the distant days of my first ministry, an elderly woman was transferred into the local seniors' home. She had never married and at 90 had outlived all her immediate family. Her nephew, unable to find an adequate facility closer to home, had moved her ›

the 200 miles to our community. She was bedridden, somewhat deaf, nearly blind... and alone. They told me she had arrived so I took my late father's little black communion kit, which my mother had presented to me on my ordination for occasions exactly such as this. I spoke the gospel words, broke the bread, shared the wine, as the church had taught me to, held her hands and prayed. And the lady knew that she was not alone. Her Saviour was with her, as he is with all the Church.

And she was grateful "beyond words." How do I know? She probably said, "thank you" though I do not recall that, but I know with complete certainty that she was grateful, not from words but because she took my hands in hers and kissed them. A reserved maiden lady, born in the reign of Queen Victoria, kissed the hands of a barely competent young minister because he had brought her the signs of the presence of the Saviour. Sometimes actions speak louder than words. There it is. We are not alone for Christ is with us and some special signs assure us of that gospel truth. Words are not always enough.

There is no word for "sacrament" in New Testament Greek. The closest equivalent in Greek is probably *mysterion* from which we get our English word, mystery. The presence of Christ with us by means of water, bread and wine, is indeed a mystery which we will never fully grasp but perhaps there are a few key points that we can understand.

One is that the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments work together. Long ago, one of the great thinkers of the Christian church, St. Augustine, noted that without the word, the water of baptism is just, well, water, nothing more. So he explained, "The word is added to the element, and there results the sacrament, as if itself is also a kind of visible word." The same is true of the bread and wine of communion. When the word is added (not a formula spoken by a minister but the gospel) these common elements become means by which Christ the Living Word is with us. Christ calls us into life with him in baptism and shares his strength with us in communion.

> Will Christ live in us because we have been baptized and share fellowship with him? If so, the sacraments will have done their work

Living Faith tells us, therefore, "In obedience to our Lord's command and example, we observe two sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion.

"These are visible expressions of the gospel given as means of entering and sustaining the Christian life."

Setting the celebration of the sacraments and the preaching of the gospel against each other would be like deciding which of our children we love most. It is possible but terribly unwise.

We sometimes call the sacraments "means of grace," that is, signs which convey the love of God we can neither earn nor deserve. As such, they are primarily God's action, not ours. They are not rites we perform for God but rather representations of what God has done for us in Jesus. To be sure, we respond to God, both at the font and table and then in our lives, with praise, thanksgiving and obedience. But it is just that, a response. Life is always a conversation with God. But God has the first and primary word and also, for that matter, the final word. The work of the visible words of the sacraments assure us powerfully of the love of God for us.

(By the way, this emphasis on the sacraments as the work of God is why we have ministers rather than priests and communion tables not altars. The Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice we offer to God but rather God making real and present to us, through the Holy Spirit, the sacrifice Christ offered, once and for all, for us. But that would be another article.)

Still, we do not have to insist that our understanding of the sacraments is the only correct one nor do we need to define all the processes of the sacraments. The history of Christianity has too often been marred by battles, sometimes literary and sometimes literal, over the mode of Christ's presence in the sacraments.

Our spiritual ancestor, John Calvin, though among the most rational and intellectually rigorous of theologians, was content to leave the manner of that presence somewhat undefined. Calvin writes: "In his sacred supper Christ bids me take, eat and drink his holy body and blood under the symbols of bread and wine. I do not doubt that he himself truly presents them and I receive them." There is a presence of the Lord Jesus in the sacrament that is at once symbolic and real but Calvin does not venture fully to explain what he experiences by faith.

In the end it does not matter so much how Christ is present with us as that he is present. The real question is not what happens to the bread and the wine in communion or to the water in baptism. The question is what happens to us. Will Christ live in us because we have been baptized and share table fellowship with him? If so, the sacraments will have done their work.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris is dean of St. Andrew's Hall at the Vancouver School of Theology.

Fyodor Andreyevich Bronnikov, 1886

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

The Rich Man and Lazarus

A tale of two men who lived, and died, so close and yet so far away. By Laurence DeWolfe

19th Sunday after Pentecost
September 29, 2013
Luke 16:19-31

A pastor told me about the people who took up the front pew, right below the pulpit in his downtown church. They would arrive first thing Sunday morning, as soon as the sexton opened the door. By service time they would be asleep, waking up just as the sermon started. Sometimes they would wake up with words that mean one thing inside the church ›

BUILDING HOPE

TEAM EFFORT!

This Mission team is from Waterloo Ontario – a team of 18 kids and 7 adults. This is the third time this church has sent a team. They painted Anishinabe Fellowship Centre, stripped and waxed the floors and painted the floor in the store. The team also helped with outings with the Flora House Summer Day Camp.

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Jesus names the huge, yawning chasm between rich and poor

and another outside.

The preacher often met them on the street on weekdays. They were very attentive to the church property. They made sure any sidewalk garbage that accumulated around the building was picked up promptly. They spoke of that old church as their church, the minister as their friend.

One Sunday I watched that church at worship online. There was one camera and for most of the service it gave a long view, showing most of the sanctuary. I saw several figures in that front pew. I saw them move around, settle down, and sit up around sermon time. I saw an acre of oak behind that front pew. The congregation on the pulpit side crowded into the back rows. The pews on the other side of the aisle were well filled, back to front. Everyone could see the little group in the front seats. Only the minister knew their names. And, he confessed, he first got to know them so he could ask them to keep quiet during the sermon.

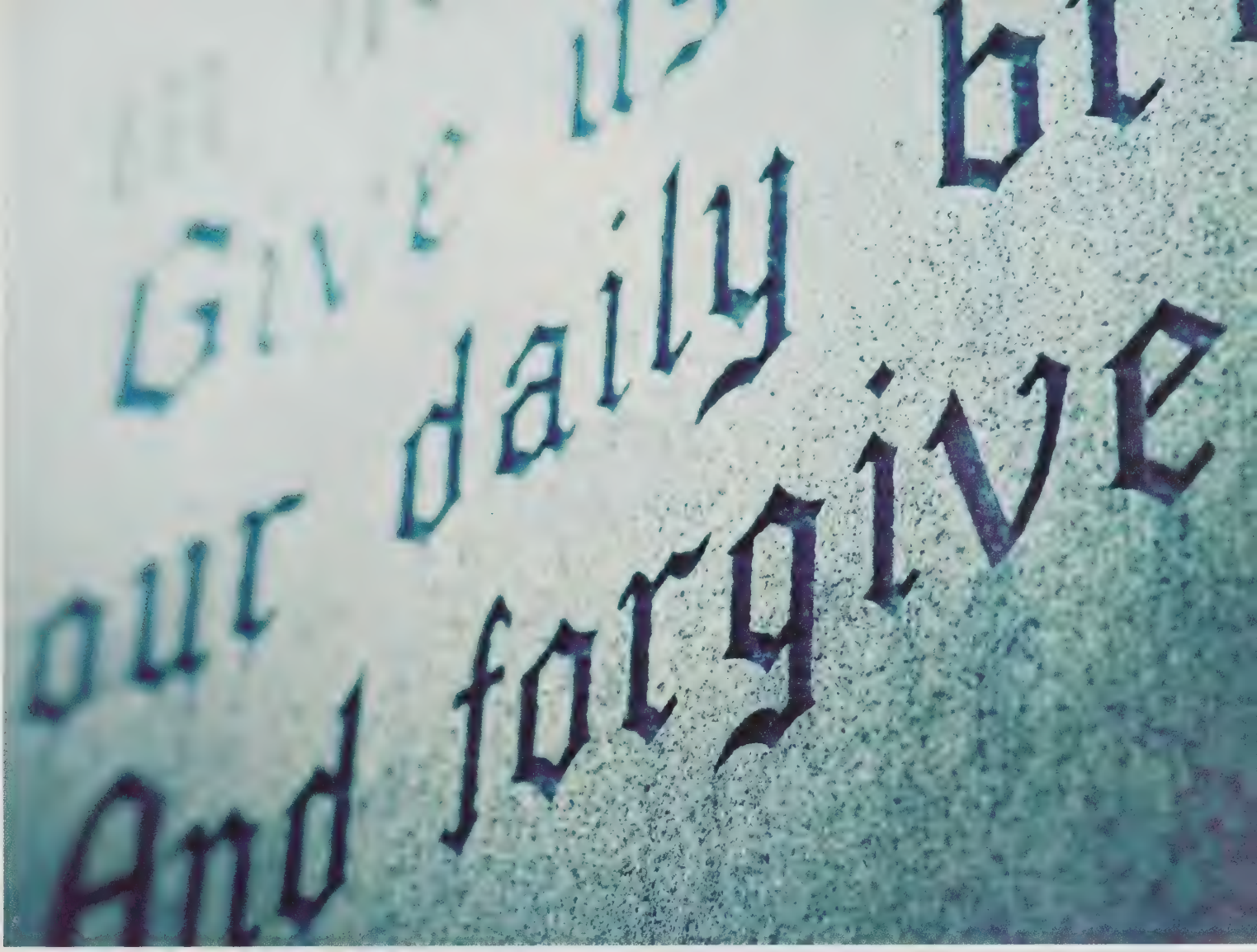
Jesus told a story we often rush through to get to the part about the (Hebrew) Bosom of Abraham and (Greek) Hades. The story isn't about, as one scholar puts it, the furniture of heaven and the temperature of hell. The destinations of Lazarus and the wealthy man are extensions of the lives they've lived.

The story is a mash-up of popular religion and folktales from several sources. It may have been familiar to some who heard Jesus tell it, or first read Luke's version of it. It challenges the popular belief that wealth is a sign of God's reward for righteousness, while misfortune and poverty are the lot of sinners. As in many good stories a reversal of fortune occurs partway through. The rich man and his family have no excuse. They have Moses and the prophets. They should know what's required of them.

There's often a great gulf between knowing what's right by the book and doing it; an acre of oak between those who measure their own righteousness and those who have no option but to leave it to God (Lazarus means "God helps"). The wealthy one knew who and where the poor man was, and what he needed. He chose not to see Lazarus lest it cost him something. Custom said table scraps should be tossed to the poor. Sometimes the poor were allowed to come in and get them, after the worthies left the dining room. It was the minimum charitable donation. There was no charity for Lazarus, in life or in death. The rich man in Hades believed Lazarus should serve him from heaven.

This parable is part of a series of vignettes in Luke's gospel in which Jesus names the huge, yawning chasm between rich and poor, those who love money and those who can't get close enough to it to feel its attraction, those who are sure of their righteousness and those the righteous are sure about. Jesus doesn't condemn either wealth or religion. Doesn't the Kingdom of God mean everyone can have a share in both? Both can be great blessings in this life. Obsession with either separates us from God and from each other. Blessings aren't for counting and saving, or piling up into walls to protect the blessed from the unworthy. Blessings are for bringing people together. Blessings are for giving away.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe teaches at Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.



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RENEWAL

Forgive and Forget

Renewal can be found in unity. By Fred Stewart

In the mid-70s I spent a year working in a TD Bank in one of the Lake Ontario towns east of Toronto. The Toronto Dominion Bank was the coming together of the Bank of Toronto and the Dominion Bank some 20 years earlier. I shouldn't have been surprised that there was still a divide in the staff between those from each bank. It is one of the countless examples of a "them and us" attitude I have witnessed all my life. I see it readily in others. I am not quite so objective in my own self-appraisal.

In the mid-90s I did an internship in a church north of Toronto. While there, divisive conflict exploded into open warfare. I'll never forget the outburst of one of the angriest seniors. "They are doing it again to us; just like 25 years ago!" she cried. The only problem was that all of the folks involved 25 years before were either dead and gone or just plain gone. She hadn't forgiven them and all the unresolved anger had festered barely below the surface until another provocation surfaced.

So what do these two vignettes have to do with renewal? As I pray, study and talk about renewal with folks from B.C. to Newfoundland, I keep pressing to identify barriers that keep us from individual and communal renewal. My non-scientific view is that individually, there is no greater category holding us back than our lack of willingness and ability to forgive those who have pained us or the ones we love. Corporately, perhaps the most consistent issue is ›

RENEWAL, continued

Jesus was front and centre on both our issues of unity and forgiveness. He prayed that we would be one as he and the Father are one

our divisiveness. I have witnessed this in even small congregations and presbyteries. I wonder if some of the desert island cartoons showing two or three inhabitants divided into camps aren't windows into our sin-riddled, divisive hearts.

Jesus was front and centre on both our issues of unity and forgiveness. He prayed that we would be one as he and the Father are one. To ensure there was not a cosmic "them and us," he actually became one of us. The barrier was broken. The bridge was constructed. He taught us to pray these dangerous words: "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." He was leading us into striving to forgive more generously, not asking God to limit his forgiveness in any way.

The gospel of Jesus Christ includes this truth. He died and rose again to defeat sin and death. His grace is sufficient to help us overcome our human frailty. We can live in unity in his grace. We can forgive even the most hated enemy in his grace. Renewal can be ours. It is our inheritance as children of the High God that we do not have to continue to live in the hopelessness that divisiveness and long standing grudges can bring.

How freeing that could be. It is good news indeed.

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship.

RENEW

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For more information and to register for the event or individual lectures, visit
www.knox.utoronto.ca/renew

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YOUR TURN

Hunger and Thirst

It's time to ask people in the pews what they want. By Karen Dunlock

In the May issue of the *Record*, managing editor Andrew Faiz asked readers to share their thoughts on the church today, and the kinds of things you would like us to address in future issues. Many of you responded; the letter below was particularly thoughtful and honest. Keep the conversation going! We love hearing from you. afaiz@presbyterian.ca

I know many of us love to talk about the future of the church but I would love to read something that is more about faith journey, that is personal and stirs people—their spiritual reflections, what they believe, how that shapes who they are, what they struggle with, what they are hungry and thirsty for and how that hunger and thirst are met in their faith.

Maybe there would be too many complaints about heresy if we listened to this in the *Record*, but hey, isn't heresy often the spark that sets the fire going?

And I want to hear not just from well thought out ministers and regional staff and moderators and columnists but other people as well, the people we say are the church, who pay attention to the world around them in their daily lives and find God there. People who read their Bible and struggle with the passages in it in a real way.

Sometimes as professional church people (and a lot of your writers are that) we spend too much time looking into ›

YOUR TURN, continued

the future, being critical of the present church and trying to solve it. We write about the churches that are doing well and what it might take to do well ourselves. And we feel burdened in doing that, perhaps because it is works righteousness in many ways, perhaps because we feel we don't or can't measure up. For lots of reasons it becomes a heavy conversation—and it is very heavy (or at least for me these days it is).

Eugene Peterson says sometimes the church we want is the enemy of the church we have and I am wondering if I am feeling the pain of that at this point in my life, and if that is the pain I sometimes feel when I read the *Record*.

That the church needs to change is, I suspect, the topic of more sermons during the last 2,000 years than we can even begin to imagine. It's not something new, this conviction; it's not rocket science. And yet we tread around it like fearful puppies rather than realizing it is who we are.

And I know even as I speak here I am convicting myself because that sounds so preachy.

As a minister I feel that I ought to be preaching inspiring sermons that get people up off their seats and out into the world, but if I stop and listen to my congregants is this why they have parked themselves in the pews in the first place? They are out in the world six days a week. They have come in for the day and what are they hungry for?

I have been trying to practice writing my own reflections on my journey each week and am frustrated at the way I speak about church and how often my reflections come back to the church: how preachy I get, how academic I get, how much I say we have to change. How little I want to re-read even my own words and I think that too is part of why the *Record* can frustrate me; it is more of just that.

Kennon Callahan says that people are motivated strongly by these three things: community, compassion and hope. I don't think that the hope I point to some Sundays (talking about a renewed and missional church) is generally what congregants are coming to hear. Same goes for the way I describe community and compassion. It is often too abstract, too removed; it doesn't engage their hungers and thirsts.

What do people hunger and thirst for? I want to hear more about that and how it is met.

When I was a child at school I hated my name. Growing up, everyone was called "Karen." My name hid me among an endless group of Karens and I felt very much the least of those. Other Karens were prettier, smarter, more "in" than I was and I cringed when my name was called in school and I hated the attention that comes with having your name called. My doctor had three patients with the same first and last name as I did and once the files got mixed up. I wondered how my parents, who gave my siblings names that no one else had at the time, could have given me a name that everyone had. And then God called my name... and this was the beginning of knowing my salvation.

God knows who I am; I am not just another Karen. Jesus speaks my name with so much love that it blows me away. I was thirsty for that and I live more fully because of that.

We all have hungers and thirsts. We all have things in our lives, our name or something else that we wish were different. We have people we wish we were closer to and we have people and things we would prefer to think were not part of God's story or at least not ours. And we struggle to make sense of that. How do I live with this life I have been given? How am I faithful to Christ in my humanity?

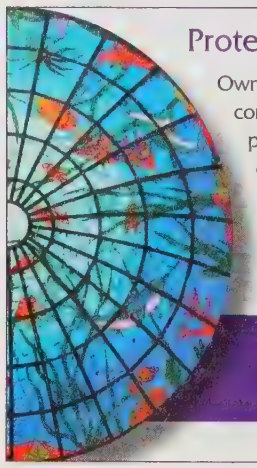
There are three questions I am thinking about as I write this. I am not sure they will make sense to you or even relate directly; these come from reflecting on the last chapter or so of Luke and the early chapters of Acts.

In Luke at the resurrection the angels ask the disciples, "why are you looking for the living among the dead?" At the ascension the men in white ask the disciples, "why are you looking up?" And at Pentecost, the people ask the apostles, "what are we to do?"

In our church, it's often the leaders asking all the questions, doing all the talking. Maybe we need to be considering the idea that they have already been asked ... oops, now I am falling into my preachy stance again ... I will sign off now.

Rev. Dr. Karen Dimock is the minister at Morningside-High Park, Toronto.

You can read Andrew Faiz's column, Your Turn, and all comments on it at ***presbyterianrecord.ca***



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FAMILY

Shaping Faith at Bedtimes

Slowing down and listening at the end of the day.

By Jeremy Bellsmith

"C'mon guys, time for bed." My comment is greeted with the usual groans and dramatic complaints.

"Daaa-aaad, it's still early!" one insists. Since when is 9 p.m. early, I wonder, stifling a yawn. With coaxing that ranges from nudges to threats, the kids finally brush their teeth and put on their pjs. Then my nine- and almost four-year olds pile onto mom and dad's bed for our nighttime ritual.

My wife and I aren't experts at this, but we've come to believe that we are our kids' first encounter with God's love, ›

FAMILY, continued

I know it's a bit corny, but it's true. Those few moments at the end of the day are some of my favourite ones

and their first examples of what it means to be a Christ-follower.

That's scary stuff. One look in the mirror and I'm praying God will work in their lives despite me. But, there they are, on the bed, awaiting our usual ritual: two questions and a prayer.

"What was your least favourite part of the day—was there anything you really didn't like?" My daughter tells about how she didn't get to scrapbook with her mom. Didn't you go shopping with her instead, I think to myself, but I hold my tongue. This isn't a time for judgment. We simply acknowledge that must have been disappointing.

My son tells the story of falling and scraping his knee. A subtle glance at his bare knees shows there's no scrape. I think he just wants to be part of this time.

"Was that for real or pretend, bud?" I ask. He assures me it's for real. This isn't the time to lecture him on the value of telling the truth. He's using his imagination to be part of this experience.

"Ok, so what about your favourite part of the day?" I ask. This second question is my favourite. I'm regaled with stories of going to the park, or playing with friends, or spending time as a family.

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"What was yours?" my daughter always responds.

"Um, being here with you guys," I say. I know it's a bit corny, but it's true. Those few moments at the end of the day are some of my favourite ones. Ever.

After we're done with the two questions, we pray, a different person praying each night. We say "thank you" for the good things and pray about the hard things. The prayers are simple, yet heartfelt.

It has taken some time to get to this place and I'm sure those times will change as the kids grow up. It's also not an every night occurrence. Sometimes, the summer sun has gone to bed before the kids have and we're scrambling to carry their limp bodies with smirking faces up to bed.

But I think it's important that we keep coming back to it. Here's why:

1. Talking with God is normal.

Prayer doesn't have to be what we do when we've run out of other options; it can be more than the last cry of a desperate person. It can be a lifestyle where we acknowledge God with us, Giver of good gifts, Comforter in our tough times.

If my kids experience this most evenings, I hope they will develop a worldview where talking with God is perfectly normal and healthy.

2. Looking through the day for the good and giving thanks for it.

Life brings to us far more then we can possibly attend to consciously. So, we are constantly selecting the things we'll notice, the memories we'll keep. Whether we see the glass half empty or half full depends on what we choose to notice.

If anyone is like me, then seeing the darker stuff comes easily. I can often end my day recalling the projects I didn't finish, the words I regret saying, the actions I wish I'd done differently. It's a skill to look for the good.

And look for it we should.

If God is present at all times (and many of us believe that goes with the whole "omnipresent" thing), then there is good in most circumstances because our good God is there. Finding God, dwelling on the good, giving thanks for it, is life-giving. It's an assurance that God will never leave nor forsake and that the One from whom every good and perfect gift comes is present with us. The proof? We've seen our good God at work.

3. Parents are a safe place to talk about hard stuff.

My daughter was bullied not too long ago. When I asked what the least favourite part of the day was, she hummed and hawed. When she grows quiet, I know something is wrong.

We pushed just a bit; waited just a bit. It came out that some kids had done some really mean things to her. That question became the opportunity for us to talk with her about that event.

I hope that as they both age, the habit of asking and answering these questions, of being able to share happy and yucky feelings, will instill a belief that mom and dad can be trusted; that we're a safe place to talk.

This is what's working in our home. I'd love to hear what's working in yours.

Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith is minister at Burns, Ashburn, Ont. He wrote this article for his blog, Transitibus. You can find it at ***presbyterianrecord.ca.***

GETTY IMAGES

ETHICS

Why Work Isn't Working

And what the church can do to encourage ethical practices. By Kevin McCabe

Last year my wife was attending an employment seminar to hear a presentation from the manager of a telemarketing firm. After he had made his pitch about what an excellent job prospect this was, he invited questions from the group. It turned out that workers put in eight to 12-hour shifts, mostly evenings and nights. Workers had one day off per week, but the company decided which day. There was monitoring of calls and video surveillance. Salary was marginally above minimum wage. There were no perks or benefits.

"Well, then," he asked, "who would like an application form?" Not one person responded. In a room of 20 unemployed people, not one wanted to sign on with this company.

Indeed, there are numerous indications that many people today would do almost anything rather than one of these McJobs. Worker's compensation, unemployment insurance, mental, emotional and sick leave, self-employment, working at home, social assistance, and simply toughing it out with much-reduced finances are some avenues being taken to avoid low-paying, disagreeable jobs.

But it isn't only the lower level jobs that inspire avoidance behaviour. Positions that used to be considered desirable, including some government jobs, are now being given a wide berth. Today's virulent strain of neo-capitalism generally views employees as expenses and liabilities, and seems determined to make sure that they don't get too comfortable. Exceptions tend to be growth areas, such as new technologies, where companies anticipate making substantial profits. ›

ETHICS, continued

It has become standard in some industries to have a 90-day "probationary period," which allows employers to "cherry pick" the best workers and let the majority go. Others make sure that employees don't get enough hours to be considered full-time. There is also an array of "dirty tricks" which allow employers to get more work than they are actually paying for. An example would be only paying for business hours but expecting workers to spend extra time on the job, such as staying on to tidy up or coming in early to set up.

Unfortunately, administrative activity often goes beyond tricky rip-offs to actual harassment and bullying. One human resources officer told me he would meet at conferences with other HR people to plan ways to get rid of workers whom management didn't like. He had a 16-step guide to isolate, marginalize and emotionally punish "undesirable" employees. Perhaps these people would get the message and quit on their own. If not, some may eventually experience nervous breakdowns and physical collapse.

The modern business system works on a cost-benefit analysis model. Employment is seen as a cost and must be reduced to the minimum. The ideal would be slave labour, but 15 cents an hour in Bangladesh also works pretty well. In Western countries, however, corporations often vent their frustrations by treating their employees badly.

When the U.S. introduced anti-discrimination legislation in the workplace, it was anticipated that visible minorities would be the major complainants. However, 75 per cent of the cases filed were based on age discrimination. Older employees usually earn more than new hires and the conventional wisdom is to dump them before their pensions mature.

Since any system of business is concerned with generating wealth, it must necessarily be regulated to avoid major social damage. For example, it was decided in the 19th century that slavery was not an appropriate mode of turning a profit. Nowadays governments themselves operate on a cost-benefit basis, and argue that regulating business is both costly and counter-productive. So corporations now are largely free to regulate themselves (wink, wink! Nudge, nudge!).

Normally, the simple ethical answer to harm is to stop doing it. However, the profit motive is so ingrained in the business model that discontinuing a profitable product is usually considered the last possible alternative. For example, the U.S. tobacco industry spent more than $8 billion on advertising in 2011 in an effort to maintain high levels of cigarette sales.

Sharp practices easily become established. For example, Black and Decker introduced its hand-held "DustBuster" in 1979, and within six months, rival firms had knock-offs on the market. This example became the industry rationale for decimating research and development divisions. With the courts either bemused or caught up in deregulation, companies were mostly free simply to steal ideas for new products. Microsoft reportedly rode to success on the wave of co-opting the innovations of others.

Churches, on the whole, either take the conservative attitude that capitalism is better than the alternatives, or else they adopt a rather unprofitable Marxist-type opposition to all business enterprises. The real point is that all systems of doing business require regulation to avoid harm.

Since cost-benefit analysis is a decision-making tool which side-steps moral issues, there exists an excellent opportunity for churches to point out the pitfalls of unregulated business. The first initiative of the churches should be to establish (chapter and verse) where business needs to be regulated in order to avoid the moral hazards that are part of our current mode of doing business.

The churches are also well situated to address the larger question regarding how global economic developments can be brought under a responsible democratic framework. At the national level they could be asking: How many citizens voted for out-sourcing of jobs? How many agreed to increase their proportion of taxes to compensate for the corporations who have found tax havens? How many Canadians decided to do more work for smaller wages in order to aid the corporations and their stockholders? And, how many voted in support of government moves to marginalize unions and workers' associations?

Capitalism and socialism have become so engrossed in maximizing production and economic power that participants in these systems no longer think of themselves primarily as human beings interacting with other human beings. (As Thoreau put it, "We have become tools of our tools.") Both at the personal and systemic levels then, the human scale of things needs to be restored as our primary reference point. A more balanced view of society and its activities can be summed up neatly with a variation on one of Jesus's more revolutionary sayings, Economic systems were made for man, not man for economic systems (Mark 2:27).

Kevin McCabe is a writer, teacher and poet who lives in St. Catharines, Ont. He is the author/editor of several books and numerous articles.

GETTY IMAGES

MEDITATION

Speechless Service

Eliciting love without saying a word. By Doug Schonberg

A year and a half ago I woke up on a Sunday morning and literally couldn't speak. I'm a preacher. This was a problem. After my hurried trip to the hospital, doctors initially labeled it a "T.I.A." It stands for Transient Ischemic Attack, which is the sophisticated way of saying, "mini-stroke." I had never heard the term. While I felt fine in every other respect, it was as if my dentist had injected an excessive amount of Novocain directly into my tongue.

Finding myself speechless when I was expected to bring a message was truly unsettling. But I was perversely grateful to at least have had a medical excuse this time. Much more unsettling has been those times I stepped behind a pulpit or podium only to have words fail me. Unfortunately, this experience usually converges with those occasions when people are most attentive and eager to hear what the preacher has to offer. They are the times of crisis, catastrophe or deep confusion. What can a preacher say? Sometimes there are no words.

Meghan's funeral service was one of those occasions. My words rang hollow. I was speechless. Meghan was only 12 years old when she died. Her life was wrapped in mystery. She had been born without a heartbeat and without breath. It seemed she wasn't intended to live. Her parents and the medical team fought for her. With persistent, determined ›

MEDITATION, continued

and dedicated intervention, with monitors, medications and machines, they gave her a heartbeat. She was infused with the breath of life.

The doctors said Meghan would only live 24 hours. For three days in a row they said it. Then they said it was time to turn off the respirator. They said Meghan wouldn't live long once this was done. They said that on the rare chance she did live, her life would never be normal. Her potential would be limited. Her movement would be minimal. Her mental functioning would be indeterminate. She would need a permanent feeding tube. She would have trouble hearing and trouble seeing. She wouldn't speak.

I've been with families when faced with this terrorizing choice. I've wondered what to say. Do you voice the unspeakable? "Let her go." Or do you commit them to a life of providing endless, intense care and resources with the words, "Help her live." The family decided to remove the respirator.

But Meghan disregarded the doctors' words. She ignored the voices around her and instead made her own choice. When the respirator was turned off, while everyone around her held their breath, Meghan caught hers. Her exceptional life began.

Hers was a life of doctors' appointments and specialist appointments. It was a life of consultations with health equipment technicians, health care workers and home care helpers. It was a life of being fed, being changed, of someone else dressing her and leading her where she did not want to go. Her life was a mystery that had people reflexively asking the question, "Why? Why was Meghan alive?" There she was, in a wheelchair her entire life, mostly blind, mostly deaf, unable to eat, never mind feed herself. She missed out on all the things children love like playing, skipping, singing, arts and crafts. She never spoke. She never said a word. Then at 12 years old, she died. Why? What could I say?

In most respects my life is a study in contrast to Meghan's life. I'm a six-foot-tall, white, North American, male pastor with a postgraduate education. I supposedly possess many pieces of advantage that can be used to assemble a purposeful life. I have tried. I have built my life around encouraging people to follow Jesus. I have given my life to declaring God's unconditional love. I have been endlessly trying to teach and call out self-sacrificing love from God's people. I talk about it all the time. Sometimes I wonder if that's all I ever talk about.

Yet for all my supposed advantages, Meghan in her short life totally surpassed my ability to evoke Jesus' life of sacrificial love in others. She accomplished it without saying a word. Meghan taught everyone around her that true love isn't earned but a gift to be received.

Meghan was not loved because she was clever, or fast on her feet, or charming. Meghan was loved simply because she was Meghan. Through her weakness and vulnerability, she brought forth unconditional love from those around her. Her parents, her brother, her sister, her extended family, her neighbours and friends the staff and students at her schools, her doctors and nurses, they all gave practical, abiding and sacrificial love, as a gift, expecting nothing from her in return. I don't know that I've ever elicited that kind of response. Words fail me.

Without the advantage of height, or ability, without a post-secondary education, without the authority of any role or title, without speaking a word, Meghan did a powerful and exceptional job of shaping people into the likeness of Christ. I can only pray that I might be half as effective as she was.

When speechless, I have echoed the apostle Paul's prayer, asking for my weakness to be removed. I have wanted to be powerful for God. Paul said he pleaded three times for God to take his weakness from him. God answered him with the words, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). What Paul didn't anticipate was that, like Christ, weakness and vulnerability make one effective for God's purposes.

Meghan didn't need words. In her weakness and vulnerability, Meghan was a lighthouse, drawing on the power of God's grace and love in those around her. Meghan's life said all that needed to be said without saying a word.

I would do well to listen.

Rev. Doug Schonberg is lead minister at Chippawa, Niagara Falls, Ont.

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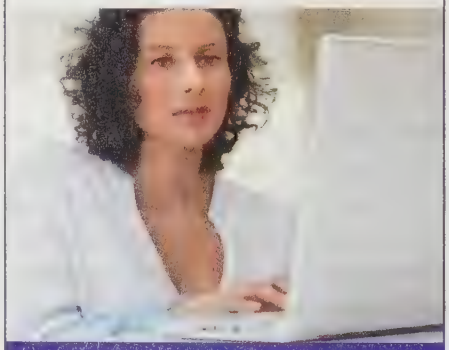

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The quarterly newsletter for Presbyterian World Service & Development • 2013 Edition, Issue 3

Food *for the future*

GUATEMALA PHOTOS: PAUL JEFFREY

SMALL-SCALE SUBSISTENCE FARMING IS HOW many families survive in developing countries. Soil erosion, prolonged drought and rising prices for seeds and commercial fertilizers make it difficult to increase crop production or purchase the variety of foods necessary to have a balanced diet. This leads to food insecurity and malnutrition.

There are 870 million hungry people in the world today. Surprisingly, it is often the people who produce food who are most food insecure. Up to 80 per cent of the world's poorest people depend on farming. Yet rural farmers often struggle to feed their families.

Food security is an essential part of what PWS&D does around the world. But what does it actually mean?

People experience food insecurity when poverty, war, poor health and climate change keep them hungry. But when people have access to enough safe and nutritious food to live a healthy life, they are considered food secure.

How do people become food secure? A lot of strategies are needed – a focus on poverty alleviation, increasing food production through improved farming methods, helping farmers with the sale and marketing of food, and reducing vulnerability to sudden price hikes for food and seeds, and environmental challenges like drought.

During Guatemala's civil war, the government's "scorched earth policy" left severe deforestation, harming the quality of soil and making it difficult for families to grow enough food. To address this, PWS&D supports the training of local agriculture promoters who learn new farming techniques aimed to strengthen resilience to environmental degradation and climate change. The promoters take the new knowledge back to their communities to showcase the benefits on their own parcels of land. Farmers receive organic fertilizer, tree saplings and vegetable seeds to plant family gardens.

Good nutrition is crucial to food security. Working with the indigenous Maya-Mam people in Guatemala, farmers are using traditional knowledge and locally available resources to both diversify diets and protect the environment. Farmers learn soil preparation, composting and vegetable planting. In 2012, over 100 families started vegetable gardens and planted fruit tree nurseries. ▶

Now farmers are harvesting vegetables from their own gardens instead of spending money at the market. To further promote healthy diets, PWS&D partners also carry out food and nutrition trainings in 15 schools, reaching over 1,200 teachers and students.

PWS&D is working towards food security around the world in places like Afghanistan, Malawi and Guatemala by teaching sustainable farming methods and good farm management, as well as providing nutrition education. By doing this, and by providing quality seed and working to strengthen local markets, families are able to secure food for today and for the future. ■

"We want to improve our living conditions and leave a good legacy for our children and grandchildren."
– THERESA DIAZ, GUATEMALAN AGRICULTURE PROMOTER

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Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community

EXPOSURE

Congo's Paradox

A wealth of resources yet poverty for millions.

By Peter Lamont

The Democratic Republic of Congo is a huge country of over 75 million people in the heart of Africa, yet its many challenges are not well reported. For two weeks in June, the social justice organization Kairos led a delegation of Canadian church representatives to the DRC, and I was privileged to join it as a representative of the Presbyterian Church.

We were hosted by Héritiers de la Justice, a Congolese human rights organization based in Bukavu, the capital of the eastern province of South Kivu. Through its various programs, ›

EXPOSURE. continued

HJ counsels survivors of gender-based violence and their families, directs them to medical and other resources, assists them with legal processes and advocates for their welfare. Each day we saw groups of women waiting patiently at HJ's offices.

But the price of actively supporting these women can be steep. Because of his work, the founding director of HJ, Pascal Kabungulu, was shot and killed in 2005.

We heard many stories from women survivors of gender-based violence and those who care for them. They spoke of attacks on rural villages by members of the militia groups that compete for control over the immense mineral wealth buried in the eastern DRC. The brutality of these attacks—some upon child victims as young as two years of age—could leave no doubt that their purpose was to terrorize.

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We were moved by the stories of the women who carry loads of rock from a small-scale quarry up a winding hillside path to the road leading to Bukavu. Until HJ intervened on their behalf, the women were not paid for this back-breaking labour. Congolese people themselves—particularly women—seemed to be the main means of transportation of goods. Especially in the rural areas, we saw roads crowded with pedestrian traffic. Everyone was carrying a heavy load.

And this was the Congolese paradox. How could such a large country, blessed as it is with both fabulous wealth in natural resources and hard-working people, be reduced to such dire poverty?

We heard from many civil society groups and church groups, as well as politicians and government officials, both in South Kivu province and in the capital, Kinshasa. In all our many meetings and discussions one question arose again and again: what was the relationship between mineral resource extraction and the ongoing conflicts in the eastern DRC?

HJ arranged for us to visit Twangiza, a gold mine operated by a Canadian company, Banro Corporation, located about 80 kilometres from Bukavu. But when we arrived we were told that company representatives were not prepared to receive us.

We had already heard from civil society groups in Bukavu about the forced movement of rural people to make way for large-scale mining projects.

One Congolese observer told us that the epidemic of gender-based violence would end if peace were made among the various warring groups. I was skeptical. A constellation of other factors—government corruption, an ineffective system of justice and impunity for those who commit these terrible crimes, the unfair distribution of resource wealth, as well as societal attitudes that denigrate women—appeared to me to be substantial contributing factors.

In the midst of these almost intractable problems, we were inspired by the heroism of people like Dr. Mukwege and his staff at Panzi Hospital, an institution in the outskirts of Bukavu. It is often the destination for women survivors of sexual violence from the rural areas. Hospital and human rights workers are increasingly targeted by armed groups. Dr. Mukwege himself was attacked as recently as October of last year, and his driver was killed.

Dr. Mukwege's attackers have not been brought to justice. Indeed, it is likely that the authorities themselves, including military authorities, are implicated in the attack, and for that reason the case will not be properly investigated or proceed to court. This was part of a pattern of impunity for human rights violations for which the Congolese military shares some responsibility. Years ago the Congolese military courts asserted jurisdiction over the murder of HJ founder Pascal Kabungulu, but they have failed to bring the case to trial.

Amongst all I experienced, two vivid images will remain with me. The first is of the people of Bukavu in their thousands, dressed in their finest clothes for Sunday worship at the many churches in the city. The service we attended was full of joyful music from two choirs, and when the singing stopped and prayer or preaching began, we could hear the singing from another church across the street or around the corner.

The second image is of a helicopter flying overhead just outside Bukavu. Each month, Banro Corp. aims to ferry over 10,000 ounces of gold out of the Twangiza mine by helicopter. It seems to me that the lives of ordinary people on the ground are untouched by the wealth that is carried away far above them.

Peter Lamont is a retired military judge and member of St. Andrew's, Ottawa. For more on his trip, visit kairoscanada.org/dignity-rights/women-of-courage.

LETTER FROM NICARAGUA

AFTER CHAVEZ

Will the death of Hugo Chavez help or hinder Latin America?

By Denise van Wissen

Celebrations at the new Hugo Chávez traffic circle on July 28.

PHOTO BY DENISE VAN WISSEN

March 5th, 2013.

It's a dark night in Managua, but people are gathered in a brightly lit area at the entrance to the marginal neighbourhood known as Barrio Hugo Chávez. They heard the news several hours ago, but the idea that their hero, Venezuela's president Hugo Chávez, has died hasn't quite sunk in.

It doesn't seem possible that the larger-than-life, fearless leader could have been snatched away before his time.

"*Yo soy Chávez*" ("I am Chávez") was the phrase on the lips of his supporters upon his death, but it doesn't sit quite right with me. A friend seems okay with it and she recently suggested that "time is now measured before Chávez and after Chávez." She has a point, and even when it became clear that his illness was terminal, it was really difficult to imagine an "after Chávez."

First elected in 1999, Venezuela's oil wealth allowed Chávez to embark on massive social spending benefiting the poor, including universal access to free health care, new schools, the abolishment of illiteracy, the reduction of poverty by half and extreme poverty by 70 per cent, according to the North American Congress on Latin America.

On the international scene, Nicaragua's newly elected socialist government was greatly bolstered through partnering with Chávez and also by its inclusion in ALBA, the Bolivarian Alliance for the People of our Americas.

I feel like I spent Chávez's entire term trying to figure out whether he was as good—or as bad—as he was depicted. When I first came to Nicaragua, I was already convinced that the Sandinistas were the "good guys" and while a few Nicaraguan friends tried unsuccessfully to persuade me otherwise, they did add more of a spectrum of ideas to my black and white view.

One well-known figure who spoke out against Chávez was a fellow Latin American, the new Pope Francisco (Francis). Prior to his election to the papacy, Cardinal Bergoglio stated in an interview that Chávez had created an "empire of dependence." I don't believe that the poor of Venezuela, or those of Nicaragua, would agree; they see it more as finally getting what the government has owed them.

Latin Americans/Nicaraguans hoping for transformation and transition have reason for hope, however. Francisco is the first Jesuit pope, and the first not only from the Americas, but the first from the southern hemisphere. "*Ya era hora,*" ("It's about time") is the general consensus here.

Still, while there are promising signs of renewal in Rome, no one expects Nicaragua's firmly entrenched, conservative and politically powerful Roman Catholic ruling class to start crumbling any time soon and some sectors of the population are fine with it as is.

Denise van Wissen is a missionary in Nicaragua working as nutrition advisor with SOYNICA, a PCC partner organization. She has enjoyed experiencing Managua's growing pains for the last 21 years.

BE CHURCH

FUN AND FAMILY

Finding a way to reach out to seniors.

By Helen Macdonald

The author with her husband of 62 years, David Macdonald, at the senior centre's Christmas luncheon.

Have you ever seen people line dancing while using a cane? Come to the senior centre at St. Andrew's, Orillia, Ont., and that's the kid of fun thing you'll find. When you enter on a Thursday morning, you will be greeted by laughter and will feel the energy in the air. We are an extended family from various backgrounds, experiences, churches, and communities, sharing, learning and growing together.

"It is a weekly joy to co-ordinate the senior centre and to work with the team of volunteers who give of their time and expertise," said Brenda Holnbeck, the centre's director.

It was Rev. Karen Horst who saw the need for something for seniors both in the church and in the community. It didn't take long to get others on board. Word spread quickly and two and a half years later, we have more than 150 names on our list with an average attendance of 60.

We meet every Thursday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., September to June. Ages range from late 50s to several in their 90s. For just seven dollars, we get a day filled with tea, coffee and treats, fun things like line dancing and choir, discussion groups (either current affairs or Bible study), lunch, entertainment or a guest speaker (who covers things like nutrition, Alzheimer's and wills), activities such as crafts, woodworking, needlework or cards, and low-impact exercise. At 3:00 we have a cold drink before departing home—a little tired but with fond memories of a wonderful day.

When we began, Rev. Karen served as the director, but once we became established, we hired someone to take on this responsibility. She is given an honorarium to cover some of the time she spends on our behalf. The committee that handles the centre also began with St. Andrew's people only, but that too has changed and we now have two members of the community sharing their expertise with us. Our music director leads the choir and our pastoral care minister leads the Bible study.

We have theme days (Christmas when Santa arrives, a Scottish day with some of our members resplendent in kilts and an Irish day with everyone wearing green). We also had a Special Olympics event and a fashion show.

We have travelled north by bus to see the fall colours, to St. Jacob's to the market and to Toronto to the theatre.

Our centre has been very successful in bringing seniors together.

We encourage others to give thought to establishing a senior centre in your community.

Helen Macdonald is a longtime member of St. Andrew's, Orillia, Ont. She was the first female clerk of session and is currently convener of the welcome and hospitality ministry and a member of the St. Andrew's senior centre team.

a humanitarian WONDER WOMAN

Samantha Nutt brings hope to places of war. By Amy MacLachlan

"War, and the pursuit of war, destroys us," Samantha Nutt writes in her book, *Damned Nations: Greed, Guns, Armies and Aid.* "It turns teenagers into killers, neighbours into génocidaires, and politicians into executioners. War is humanity at its most primitive, despite our attempts to dress it up, distance ourselves from it through technology, and frame it in acceptable terms—a battle for good in the face of tyranny or despotism or fanaticism. In the end, all wars are only one thing: people killing people."

As executive director of War Child Canada, an organization she helped found in 1999, Nutt has spent much of the last two decades amidst the aftermath of some of the world's worst atrocities. By focusing on things like education, gender equality, violence reduction and rehabilitation, her goal is to help those affected and forgotten by war—particularly women and children—in areas of crisis and conflict. She is a sought-after voice for the media, and a popular public speaker, and as such, she will be the keynote speaker at the 2014 ›

continued

Presbyterian Women's Gathering next May 16-19.

While I've yet to meet her in person, after speaking with Nutt on the phone on a warm July afternoon, I get the impression that she's some sort of humanitarian Wonder Woman, tossing her golden lasso around to invoke truth-telling and expose dishonesty and injustice around the world. Her accolades—from the Order of Canada to being named one of Canada's 25 most influential figures by the *Globe and Mail*—speak for themselves, but when, as any modern day heroine should, she minimizes her role in all of this, shifting the spotlight to the people in the field who do the work of the organization she founded, I'm sold.

The road to her superhero status began at the family dinner table. It was an opinionated place, and she was taught by her Scottish- and English-immigrant parents "to strive and fight for what I believe in, and speak my mind."

Nutt then spent much of her 43 years travelling, working and living abroad, beginning in South Africa as a very young child, then in Brazil as a teenager where friends she played soccer with by day slept in the park across from her house each night, ("I was 13 when that happened. It was the first time I really had the sense that there was a lot more going on in the world than I was exposed to back home"), then to university where she learned more about international policy and social justice issues.

> "In our house, any time there is conflict, we use it as an opportunity to teach tolerance, understanding, mutual respect and listening. These four things are extremely important"

But it was when she travelled to Baidoa, Somalia, in 1995 as a 20-something volunteer with UNICEF that Nutt realized what she was meant to do. Baidoa was then called "the city of death," as 300,000 people had died of starvation and disease just three years prior. Nutt had recently completed her medical degree and was working on a master's at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Her specific interest was "what happens to women and girls when states fail," and she went to Baidoa to assess maternal and child health as part of a national review of UNICEF's aid work there.

"It's impossible for anyone who comes so close to such conflict and sees such heartbreak and tragedy and injustice and the ways in which so much of what they're experiencing—the death, the misery, the starvation—so much of it

Resources for Children and Youth

The church has numerous resources available either online or through the WMS Book Room to help Sunday school teachers, ministers and small groups educate young people in their congregations about global issues.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

The church's relief and development agency has a number of resources that can be used to teach kids about international development. They can be found online at presbyterian.ca/pwsd/category/youth.

Two of the best are the *SuperFriends* magazines, aimed at children ages seven to 14. Fun games and activities help kids learn about various social issues such as climate change and emergency relief.

PWS&D also holds an annual Sunday school challenge (presbyterian.ca/pwsd/2012/09/28/ssc-2012) to encourage giving and education on a specific issue.

JUSTICE MINISTRIES

Advent Garden of Justice, a new resource by the church's partner organization Kairos, explores our relationship with the Earth and all who dwell in it. The resource features worship materials and activity ideas—including ideas for Sunday school—about faith and justice issues and the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy and love. Available as both print and PDF in September.

CHILDREN'S BLANKET EXERCISE

Kairos' Blanket Exercise explores the 500-year relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people on Turtle Island (North America). The activity is participatory. A children's version will be available this fall. Email Katharine Masterton in Justice Ministries at kmasterton@presbyterian.ca for more information.

MISSION STUDIES

The church also produces mission studies that can be ordered through the WMS Book Room (thebookroom.ca) or found online at presbyterian.ca/resources-mission.

The children's studies look at issues of relief, development and justice, and usually highlight the work of PWS&D, International Ministries, Justice Ministries and Canadian Ministries.

The next children's study, which will be released this fall, will look at healing and reconciliation issues. —*AM*

is avoidable," said Nutt.

"It was a difficult time in my life coming back from Somalia, but it's one that led me onto this path to figure out what we could do to make a meaningful difference. You can see the opportunities to engage people and increase local opportunities and strengthen the grassroots, but these things are often not done, so I wondered, how can we do this better?"

Nutt is also a family physician at Women's College Hospital in Toronto and a professor of medicine at the University of Toronto. Her husband, Eric Hoskins, is Ontario's Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Together, they have an eight-year-old son, Rhys. While having a child has changed her ability to just "get up and go," the danger she faces when travelling overseas does not deter her.

"There have been times when I've really felt that the risks are too great. Things that were too emotionally overwhelming and difficult," confided Nutt, like when her friend, Margaret Hassan, a 30-year veteran of humanitarian work in Iraq as director of CARE International, was kidnapped, held for ransom, and executed.

"And then I had my son, and my motivations changed again. We all have reasons why we want to see the world evolve in a more peaceful and accepting and supportive way. He made me want to get up every day and face it."

Rhys is proud of what his mom does, insisting he wear his War Child T-shirt at least once a week.

"As a parent, you want to expose your kids to help them become informed citizens, and so they understand their rights and responsibilities in that. But we don't want to turn the world into a frightening place. It's finding that balance," said Nutt. "He knows my work is to help kids like him in other parts of the world who don't have the opportunities he does. But I always frame it in the context of what does it mean to resolve conflict and listen to another person? And why it's not okay to pick up a stick and pretend you're shooting somebody. So, at least in our house, any time there is conflict, we use it as an opportunity to teach tolerance, understanding, mutual respect and listening. Those four things are extremely important."

Teaching children—even kindergartners—some basics about international development and foreign aid may sound tricky, but Nutt insists it isn't. Giving kids an awareness and basic understanding of the world around them—and that many children grow up amidst oppression and extreme challenges—is key in creating responsible, compassionate adults who care about the impact their actions can have on others.

"For example, why is it difficult for girls to go to school in some places? And how does that relate to international law and foreign diplomacy, and how do we change the structure and paradigms, and the role of NGOs?

"Too often we are taught that social justice is an act of charity, but the problem with that is, one, it makes it an optional concern; something we can engage in or not, depending on if we're feeling generous at that moment; and second, it's not part of our society. It's outside of society. I think that's really quite unfortunate."

In her book's acknowledgements, Nutt thanks the courageous individuals —who are heroes in their own right— who shared their stories with her. But her gratitude goes beyond that, thanking them for the very thing that has kept her going during these past 15 years of humanitarian work.

Thank you, she says, "for teaching me that there is always hope, and that it is worth pursuing."

Amy MacLachlan is the Record*'s senior writer. You can read her extended interview with Samantha Nutt at* ***presbyterianrecord.ca.***

Find out more about the Presbyterian Women's Gathering at womensgathering.ca. Early bird registration ends Nov. 15.

PHOTOS: WAR CHILD CANADA

Small Beginnings

Reflections on growing, living and preaching.

By Connie Wardle

It was a beautiful image with which to begin. Rev. Tom Vais preached on Psalm 1: "They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper."

I sat among young people between the ages of 19 and 25 in the wood-paneled chapel of Presbyterian College. It was just after 9 a.m. on a Saturday and the city of Montreal was quiet. We were beginning a week-long journey. Until June 26th, these young people would be learning to preach.

They came from a range of backgrounds. Most of them were from small towns in Ontario. Two hailed from a Korean congregation in Vancouver. A few grew up in the churches they still attend, teaching Sunday school in the same classrooms where they were once students. Others joined the church later in life. It was a mishmash of ages and experiences and levels of education. Some were evaluating a call to ordained ministry. Others were considering ministry in some other form.

But all of them had one thing in common: all were here because someone in each of their congregations said 'I see God's gifts in you' and urged them to go.

Throughout the week of muggy heat and afternoon thundershowers, the image of trees and water haunted me: Seeds planted by a stream, growing into trees, bearing fruit. And what is at the heart of a piece of fruit, after all, if not more seeds? ›

Rev. Dr. Dale Woods, the college's director of pastoral studies and currently its acting principal, said he decided to focus the event on preaching because it's valued in churches.

"Often I've found what young people were asked to do in church was not what young people really wanted to do," he said. "We thought, why not do something important and challenging?" And in Presbyterian worship services, the sermon is both of those things.

As the daughter of a minister and now a writer with the *Record*, I'd penned and preached a couple of sermons over the years. I figured, since I'd spent my whole life listening to sermons, between genetics and osmosis I must have picked up some skills somewhere.

Yet I knew it wasn't an easy thing to do. It takes a lot of courage (no matter how indulgent or supportive your congregation is) to stand up and speak thoughtfully, compellingly, gracefully, about God, life and the gospel. And it's impossible not to put something of yourself into a sermon. Preaching makes you vulnerable.

Like every good story, sermons are journeys. And good sermons are built around challenge and tension.

Look for places in the passage that trouble you, the session leaders urged us. That's where good sermons begin. They come from wrestling with what bothers you about a passage, what doesn't make sense; good sermons speak to the difficulties of life; they include a journey through difficulty to hope and the good news of Jesus. And a good sermon will resonate with your own experiences of the world and of God at work.

When his group was assigned the story of the prodigal son, Mitch Hipwell immediately knew his sermon would be woven from the threads of his own life's story. He doesn't look his age, but at 19, he was the youngest at the event. He was also the newest churchgoer. He has been attending Knox, St. Thomas, Ont., for only a year.

"My faith journey or my spiritual journey, whatever you want to call it, it's a small tree," he said. "It's been planted. But I still have a long way to go."

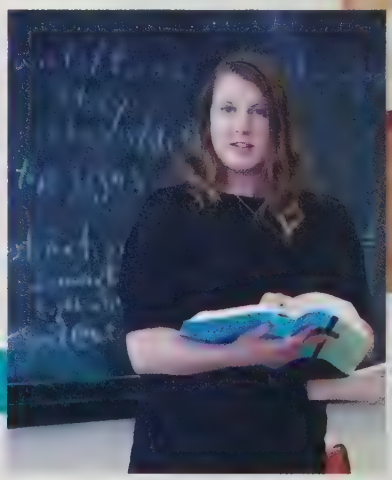
Mitch's sense of identity was thrown into turmoil in grade 10, when a painful injury followed by two knee surgeries put an end to his days of playing football. It left him hobbling around on crutches and wondering, "Well, who am I? What is this?" he said. He turned to marijuana as a "quick fix" for the physical and emotional pain, but it grew into an addiction.

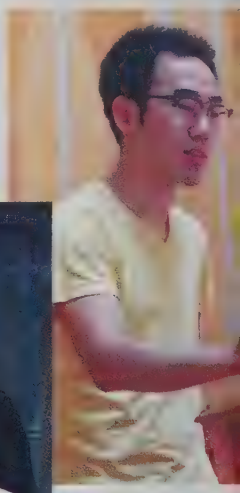
He says it was music that helped him find his identity again, and it was music that pulled him into the church. He hasn't read a lot of the Bible; hymns are what have nurtured his nascent faith.

"To be honest, I don't really regret my past," he told me one evening as I interviewed him in a corner of the cafeteria. "It's part of who I am. I still have to work at kicking this habit, because there are good days and bad days. I don't mind you saying I struggle with addiction in the article because there are a lot of people who do, whether it's drinking 10 cups of coffee a day or chain smoking or binge drinking. At least I like to hope at least one or two people within a congregation can relate or have been there."

YOUNG PREACHERS AND MENTORS

Below: Charmila Ireland; Right: Sung Bae Cho; Taya VanSchyndel





With all the focus on preaching, it was easy to forget about the act of listening. *Living Faith*, a statement of belief of the Presbyterian Church, says that those who listen to a sermon "should pray for those who speak." Listening to a sermon is not meant to be a passive act. It's meant to be participatory: we are to pray for the preacher and feast on the word.

"I think preaching is one of the ways that you learn about God most easily aside from your personal devotions because we all have filters that we see God through, and a lot of that is limited by our past experiences and the wounds we've experienced," Craig Macartney, 25, told me.

His faith journey has followed a winding path through evangelical, Alliance and charismatic churches to a Baptist congregation that meets near his home in Ottawa.

"I feel like preaching is connecting with people on a deeper level," said Cody Lewis. In his tiny congregation of Knox, Morrisburg, Ont., he is the sole Sunday school teacher, the secretary of the board of managers and head of the office committee.

For him, a sermon was not a one-way message but a starting point, which can lead to meaningful discussions about a Bible passage or experiences of God's work in the world and in individual lives.

And, as I discovered, some of the youth didn't consider preaching to be something reserved for church pulpits. Most of them had been "preaching," in one way or another, for years.

"People tend to think of sermons as preaching, but I think you could preach anywhere," Brittany Saggau told me. At age 24 she was recently ordained as the youngest elder ever in her home church of Knox, Woodstock, Ont. "You can use your actions to preach the gospel. I find my church tends to be very mission-oriented, and my family is very mission-oriented. So a big value is to give back to others and to volunteer. For me, that's a big part of preaching the gospel: actually acting it."

It was an idea Dale Woods echoed at the front of the classroom one day: there are two sermons that are preached every Sunday, he said. One is the sermon preached by the minister in the pulpit. The other sermon is the one that is lived by the congregation when they walk out the doors of the church.

It means we're all preachers in a way, whether we like it or not.

PHOTOS: PETER FORD AND CONNIE WARDLE

It's easy to get discouraged when one looks out into the average Presbyterian church on Sunday. At the conference I heard more than one person lament the size of their congregation or Sunday school or youth group. Yet there was hope, too. And personal commitment. And stories of transformation.

I had trouble imagining Cody, who kept us laughing through our dinners of quinoa salad and kabobs, as a stone-faced military man. Yet he enlisted in the army reserves on his 16th birthday as a present to himself. He thought people would respect him if he wore the uniform, he said. And he wanted to serve his community in a heroic way.

He's now 20. And in June 2012, he resigned from the reserves after four years of service. "There was a fork in the road," he said. "And because of my job in the reserves I had to decide if I wanted to pursue this as a career and go over to Afghanistan, or do I want to pursue my faith. And I felt God pulling on my heart."

It wasn't the only story of a decision made for the sake of God, or of church members telling young people they saw gifts for ministry in them—not always gifts they saw in themselves.

Sky Choi, 25, and Sung Bae Cho, 23, are from Vancouver Korean, one of the largest PCC congregations. Until he came to the event, Sung Bae said, he didn't know Sky very well. The two had crossed paths, of course, but Sung Bae is a worship leader for the church's English services, while Sky is more involved with the Korean services. And with six services every Sunday, including Sunday school, it seemed like a wonder they knew each other at all.

Sky is enrolled at Regent College in Vancouver, working on a theological degree and a Presbyterian diploma through the school's partnership with the Vancouver School of Theology.

Sung Bae spent four months last summer on the Nazko First Nation reserve, working in a job he wasn't sure he'd be good at.

He would have preferred to do a mission trip to Mexico or South Africa, where his church supports a pastor. But, like most young people his age, he was also worried about finances and was looking for a summer job.

Vancouver Korean has been supporting the First Nation community for over a decade and runs a yearly Vacation Bible School for children on the reserve.

"Some people were really involved in it, but it wasn't really my thing," he told me when we sat down for an ›

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Presbyterians across Canada are helping our theological colleges – St. Andrew's Hall (Vancouver School of Theology), Presbyterian College in Montreal and Knox College in Toronto – to inspire and equip theological students to be effective leaders who can help our congregations share the good news in their communities and beyond.

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interview. "So that was my last option for missions."

"I was struggling really hard. I think it was a Friday night, I was in the shower, and this thought came to me: If I find a job, if anything, it's coming from God. God's going to be giving me the job. And if I don't find a job, it's God also. I made the decision to go. When I got out of the shower, I texted our missions deacon."

He later sat down for lunch with the deacon and his pastor, who was in the middle of a phone call. When he hung up, the pastor asked if Sung Bae wanted to work in Nazko First Nation for the summer. He unexpectedly had a job in the mission field—albeit the one in which he felt the least qualified. But then, God has a tendency to do that to us.

On our final morning together, we returned to the image of growing things. Rev. Tom Vais preached on the parable of the sower and the parable of the mustard seed. And he pulled some of it from the first sermon he ever preached.

"You don't really know what God is doing when you do this," Dale Woods had told us on our first day together. He said his first sermon was awful. Yet when he preached it, a man in the congregation asked for a copy. You never know if you will say just what someone needs to hear—if your words will become God's words for someone.

"I don't know of anything that suddenly appears full-grown," Tom said. "Do you? Everything has a beginning; someone has to get it started. Why couldn't it be you who gets it started?

"God grows His kingdom with small mustard seeds of faith. God builds His kingdom from the smallest of building blocks, person by person, throughout the centuries of human existence. ... Don't be discouraged by small beginnings."

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s staff writer. She is a member of Westview, Toronto.*

FROM THE MODERATOR

Moderator vs. Mountain

The Spirit may lead us into the wilderness. By David Sutherland

The second highest peak in Newfoundland, Gros Morne, "the Great Sombre," is 802 metres high and offers a refreshing trek through balsam forest, a steep ascent of rocky gully, a summit with the best view of this scenic world heritage site and a gradual descent of eight kilometres.

Some years I wait for the perfect climbing day: sunny and the wind at no more than five kilometres. This year I waited three days, but took the fourth day because it was "do-able."

I often recite the psalms of the ascent to worship and reflect upon Jesus and his disciples or Moses and the patriarchs ascending the mountains to pray. Gros Morne is about the same height as the Mount of Olives so the connection is not a stretch. This year, on June 27th, fresh from General Assembly, my thoughts were upon the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Matthew, Mark and Luke agree that it was the Spirit who led or drove Jesus into the wilderness as his first steps.

This is a wonderful starting point for the church or for any of us as we consider our place in the presence and work of God, the Holy Spirit. Pictures of the Israeli wilderness show that it

was not a place of comfort. It looks like the top of Gros Morne. The pictures of the Israeli Negev, of brown, rocky mountains, come to mind as I leave the foothill path through the balsam forest to ascend the rocky gully. The gully is always a test of the heart. I feel the weight of the three litres of water I carry. I rejoice in my choice of quality hiking boots over sneakers. I discover the limits of my discipleship when I remember "His" sandals. Each steep step severs my attachment to extra baggage. Whatever happened yesterday and whatever is coming up tomorrow loses importance when you focus on survival today. The rests to recapture my breath help me realize how much more clearly I now see the world from this wasteland.

My journey across the top this year was disappointing. The clouds hung close, the wind carried a chill. It wasn't a pleasant journey but it was the one I was meant to take.

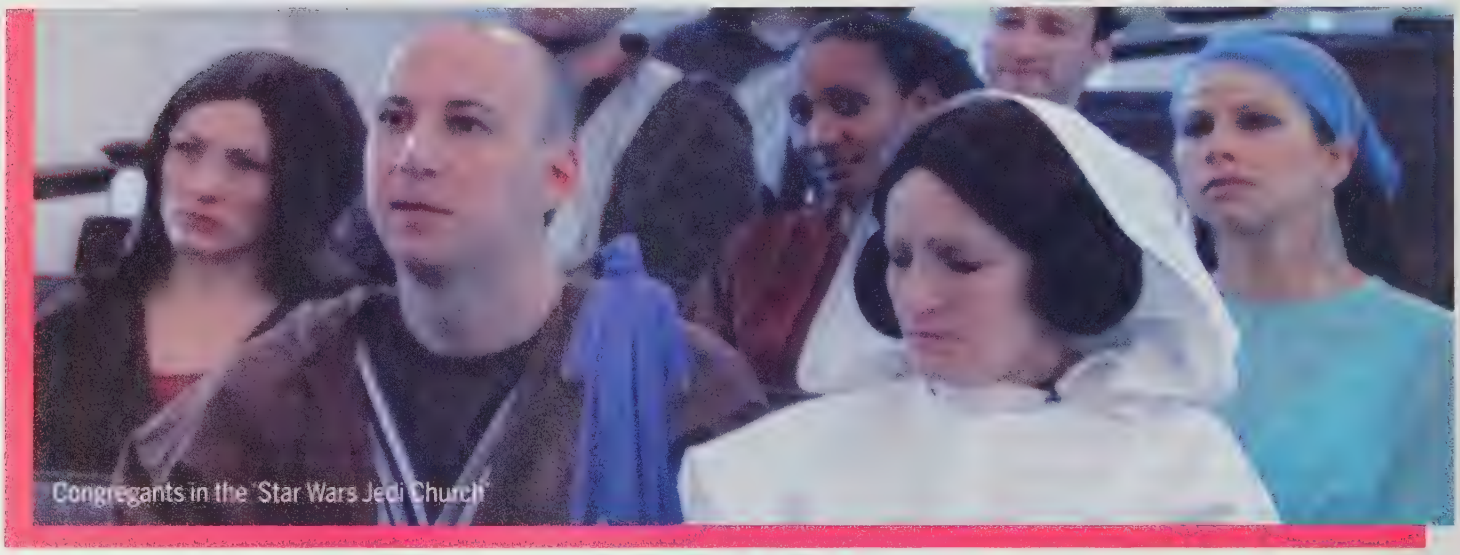
The Holy Spirit as the One who leads or drives the church is often thought of as comforter and counsellor and friend. But the Holy Spirit may be the One who leads God's people into the wilderness, a place for us to let go of our baggage and to celebrate the provision of what we really need. Jesus said, "And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8).

We often think of Jesus' time in the wilderness, an experience of temptation, as a separation from his people. Through the experience of temptation, it was also a time of growing attachment with those for whom he would die. I think of the many wilderness experiences of the human journey and profound fellowships that grow out of hard and testing times. The Spirit displays how interwoven Jesus' life became in ours and how entwined our lives should become in His. Time in the wilderness nurtures an appreciation of others. The Spirit is the one appointed to get us where we need to be in the quality of fellowship we are destined to enjoy.

Rev. Dr. David Sutherland is minister at St. Andrew's, St. John's.

Lazy September Surfing

Some sites to pass the time. By Bradley Childs


Congregants in the 'Star Wars Jedi Church'

MOVIE

It's called *Rapture-Palooza*. This is exactly what it sounds like. Since the *Scofield Bible* came out in 1909 supporting John Darby's understanding of a pre-millennial rapture, the western world has been obsessed with end-times theology. Countless books and films have been written about this view of the saints being ushered up into the heavens. One need look no further than the *Left Behind* series and its popularity to see its newly found prominence in our society. So it was only a matter of time before someone made a hard-hitting comedy about it. *Enter Rapture-Palooza*: a raunchy R-rated film about a couple of young people surrounded by talking locusts, running through the rain and blood-soaked post-apocalypse world trying to find and kill the Antichrist. Now I haven't seen it. And the consensus is, it's terrible. But then again, I might just be that rare person this movie had as its target audience. Or maybe not.

FIND IT @ YOUTUBE.COM

LIFE THREATENING

A Sermon Gone Bad

It is, of course, always dangerous to let oneself be recorded. You can scarcely get through the week without hearing about the latest celebrity misconduct caught on tape for all the world to see. Are celebrities today that much worse then they were 50 years ago or are they just more easily caught these days? I'm inclined to say, "no one is perfect" and feel thankful I'm not being recorded in my worst of times. But with that said, if you are the minister of a church and you know you are being recorded, well, try your hardest to not be too mean to your congregation. Unfortunately for him, Pastor Jim Standridge didn't have the luxury of heeding my advice. I came too late. Instead he stood in the pulpit of Immanuel Baptist Church of Skiatook, Oklahoma, and had a little break down where he gave the congregation a good what-for.

FIND IT @ YOUTUBE.COM. SEARCH FOR "JIM STANDRIDGE."

STAR WARS CHURCH

This is just a little fun for all you self-proclaimed nerds out there. Which, by the way, is now cool. See, being nerdy is now ironic and hipster-like and because it's precisely the not caring that makes them cool, well, that's why they go to all that trouble to not care ... wait ... oh, who cares. Anyway, embrace your inner nerd and check out this short clip.

FIND IT @ YOUTUBE.COM. SEARCH FOR "STAR WARS JEDI CHURCH."

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

PILGRIMAGE

ONE WHO NEVER FEARED

John Knox, man of faith and politics.

By Connie Wardle

A window in St. Giles, Edinburgh, features John Knox in the pulpit.

From July 6 to 22, 2012, Connie Wardle participated in a pilgrimage through countries touched by the Protestant Reformation—France, Switzerland and Scotland. This is the eighth of a series of reflections on the journey.

It seemed like John Knox's life was never to be one of peace and safety. It's no wonder so many of his portraits and statues depict a fierce man, his beard nearly bristling with passion. His life was frequently in danger; his Reformation was tangled with the threads of political power; and after more than a year imprisoned on a French galley, his health often failed him.

At his graveside, the Earl of Morton called him "one who never feared any flesh." I wonder if it could have been true.

He certainly had reasons to be afraid.

In England, he was forced to flee when Mary Tudor took the throne. She was devoutly Catholic and hostile to Protestantism. The relentless persecution of Protestants during her reign would earn her the nickname "Bloody Mary."

She was not the only queen to dislike him. While in exile in Geneva, Knox penned a controversial work which became a source of trouble for him. It was charmingly entitled, *The first blast of the trumpet against the monstrous regiment of women,* and it serves as a warning to be careful what you write. Although the little book was aimed at Queen Mary, it condemned female rulers in general. Thus, not unreasonably, it earned the ire of Elizabeth I who became queen after Mary died in 1558. She barred Knox from England.

Instead he headed directly for his native Scotland, where his passionate preaching turned his listeners into mobs that stripped local churches of their Catholic trappings. This made him unpopular with yet another queen, Mary, Queen of Scots, and her French mother and regent, Mary of Guise.

Knox eventually became a leader of the Church of Scotland and preached his sermons from the pulpit of St. Giles High Kirk in Edinburgh.

He met with the Scottish queen a number of times, fighting over theology. And later, when she was implicated in the murder of her second husband, his voice was one of many that called for her to abdicate in favour of her son, James VI.

He sounds like an imposing man, willing to stand his ground. Yet I wonder if he was the bristling, bellowing man I imagine him to be. Perhaps he wouldn't recognize himself in his glowering statues and strident stained-glass likenesses. We admire fearlessness and faithfulness and perhaps he had both in equal measure. But perhaps he was afraid, as so many men in his position would be afraid, and he simply held to his course. Tenacity is often the stuff of saints.

Connie Wardle is the Record's *staff writer.*

KNOX, ACTON, ONT.
Last June, the congregation honoured four elders for their 152 years of combined service. Here, Rev. Ralph Neil and clerk of session David Gilchrist present memorial bibles to Betty Armstrong, Mac Sprowl and William Mainprize. Not pictured is Wanetta Stiles, who was unable to attend.

ST. ANDREW'S, AURORA, ONT.
During their May meeting, the Presbytery of Oak Ridges honoured Rev. Gordon Beaton for 50 years of ministry.

People & Places

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ST. MARYS, ONT.
After discovering one of their members would be celebrating his 50th year of ordination in May, Sunday school classes spent six months creating a prayer quilt for Rev. Merv Tubb and his wife Barb. Rev. Gwen Ament (right) presents the gift to the Tubbs.

GLENCOE, ONT.
On the last day of the Calgary Stampede, the congregation held a Stampede Breakfast in support of PWS&D's Alberta appeal. They raised $737. Pictured here are Lisa Varekamp, Linda Paterson, Lyn Moniz and Bethany Morton.

WESTMINSTER, OTTAWA
In March, Guy Smagghe (right), senior program co-ordinator for PWS&D, visited Ottawa to talk about the Afghanistan Girls Education Program. He poses with Bill Rankin, president of the congregation's mission team.

KNOX, NORTH EASTHOPE, ONT.
In June, five youth joined the church. Pictured here are: in the back row, elders Lors Horne, Alex Hart and William Rutherford; in the middle are clerk of session Arthur Horne, Rev. Andrew Fullerton and new member Justin Horne; and in front are fellow new members Jacqueline Fryfogel, Grace Fullerton, Jason Fryfogel and Emily Horn.

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obituaries

Ray, Ronald Dixon, August 8, 1930-June 21, 2013. Ron passed away peacefully on June 21, 2013 in the palliative ward of North York General Hospital surrounded by his loving family. A proud and dedicated Presbyterian, Ron was born in Walkerville, Ont., and grew up at St. Andrew's Church in downtown Windsor, which his family had attended since the early 20th century. In 1955 he and his wife Cathy moved from Windsor to Don Mills, Ont., and began attending St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, which had been founded the year before. Ron immediately became involved in fostering the young church, becoming an elder in 1960 and serving as Clerk of Session from 1961 to 1987. He also served on many boards and committees during his 58 years at St. Mark's.

Ron was known as a warm, caring and kind person who brought joy and laughter to every situation. He was always particularly welcoming to the children at St. Mark's, greeting them with a firm handshake and a big smile. Many adults told Ron's family that he is the reason they became members of St. Mark's. A born salesman, Ron worked for several companies selling folding cartons before starting his own business in 1991 called RDR Packaging. It became extremely successful and Ron was never happier than being his own boss. Since 1956, Ron and his family enjoyed summers at the family cottage on Lake Huron, south of Kincardine. Ron was very proud of his Scottish heritage and loved bagpipe music. He and his family especially enjoyed marching with the Kincardine Scottish Pipe Band every Saturday night in July and August.

Ron is survived by his wife of 59 years Catherine, his children Leslie (John Welwood), Ian (Linda) and David as well as his grandchildren David, Jamie, Tyler and Lauren.

Matthew 25:21 "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Sutherland, Rev. A. Laurie, June 24, 1923-March 24, 2013. The Rev. A Laurie Sutherland was born in Consort, Alta., a son of the manse. Laurie attended school in Priceville and Flesherton, Ont., and in 1942 enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force serving as a flight instructor and a trainer for air gunners. As a theology student in '47 and '48 he served charges in Briercrest, Sask., and Pleasant Heights Calgary, Alta. Laurie graduated from Knox College in May 1951 and married Elizabeth Grant, a student at the Presbyterian Missionary and Deaconess Training School six weeks later.

Their first charge was at Rocky Mountain House, Alta. Five years later he was called to Chippawa and Crowland in Niagara presbytery, Ont. After eight years he was called to St. Andrew's, Belleville, Ont., where he spent the next 17 years. He served both as moderator of synod and as clerk of the Presbytery of Kingston during these years. From there he was called to St. Andrew's, Streetsville, Ont., where he retired in 1990 to the pew at St. Andrew's, Barrie, Ont. After 39 years of ministry, Laurie continued to do pulpit supply and to serve as Barrie's Legion Padre until this last year.

Laurie is survived by his wife Elizabeth, their five children and 12 grandchildren. The congregation of St. Andrew's in Barrie will miss Laurie's warmth, wisdom, humour and his deep faith in his Lord and Savour Jesus Christ.

so cute and frisky." The three of us were suffering real rodent remorse.

"That little bushy tailed rat! He just jumped at a pine grosbeak and knocked it clear off the branch next to the bird feeder. And look; he just did a one-handed twirl around the next branch and almost nailed a common redpole in mid-air before doing a two-and-a-half-gainer to land on the wrought iron railing. And now he's going right after the Chickadees." Linda was incensed.

"He's back!" I said. "Apparently the rumours of his demise have been greatly exaggerated."

"Nice one, Marc Twang," Linda said. "I am going after the broom so I can defend my fine feathered friends. Oh, how quickly I forget how much that bushy-tailed rodent can get me irked sometimes."

What is it about our ability to have fond memories of even the hardest scenarios or the most difficult characters after they have passed? For most critters we share life with, in most situations that make up our lives, we, or perhaps I should say I, seem quick to think the best of them when they have gone. Beyond the occasional real catastrophe that darkens my skies, the truly dreadful persons or events that sometimes envelop me, most of the time I seem inclined to think the best, to remember with fondness, to be attracted to the goodness. This puzzles me enough to have caused me to spend considerable time thinking about it.

I have a theory. My theory is that we are created in the image of God, declared by God to be very good, and in spite of being fallen creatures living in a fallen world, most of the time, most of us are looking for the good, yearning to think the best. It's like God has placed in our created being something from His own image that is attracted to the positive and the good.

The ramification of this with regards to my Christian faith is becoming increasingly important to me. I am coming to the conclusion that we humans are inclined to think the best, cut out for good news, created for gospel. I guess what I am saying is that I don't always need to be convinced of the bad news in order to be logically persuaded of the Good News; I have been cut out for gospel, created to receive it. The same thing that makes me want to believe the best with situations, critters and people has caused me to have a built-in receiver for the good news in Jesus. Deep down, whether I think I am dark and sinful or not, I want to hear that there is a good God that loves me so much that He became flesh in order to initiate and facilitate a personal relationship with me.

> I don't always need to be convinced of the bad news in order to be logically persuaded of the Good News

I find this insight illuminating when it comes to sharing my faith. The other day I was sitting next to a very thoughtful, middle-aged teenager at a pot-providence church dinner. He brought up the subject of evangelizing his peers. He had been reading that it was absolutely necessary to convince a person that they were a sinner before they could receive the good news of a loving, saving God and a Savior. And we talked about how hard it was to get the mind around convincing someone that they were a sinner, never mind actually getting down to doing it. No one finds it easy to begin a discussion on a deep, personal negative. But I wonder, with sharing my faith, does every discussion about salvation need to begin with a condemning discussion about personal depravity? Is salvation and a relationship with a loving, saving God always "needs" driven? I am becoming persuaded that this is not the case. Wasn't it Jesus who said "...God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17).

When I think about it, there are lots of things that I give myself to that are not driven by my need. I didn't get married because I needed a wife. There was something deep within my created being that was attracted to Linda's peculiar goodness, charm and loving nature. You can call it chemistry if you want to, but I know I was created to receive the goodness that was in Linda. And you know what, if I look back at my own story of coming to God, it didn't begin with an awareness of my depravity. I was attracted by God's goodness and love, cut out for the good news that He loved me, created for the gospel in Jesus. The awareness of my own darkness and sin came after that, after I stood personally for a time in the illumination of God's pure light and came under the influence of the Word and the Spirit. And boy did it ever come then.

The long and the short of all this is, I am not likely to condemn someone on the basis of their personal depravity, but I can and will share the good news of God's love. And as to evangelism, I think that's all it takes. ✝

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of several books.

FOR THE JOURNEY

A Requiem for Squirrel?

We are built for good. By David Webber

It was a sad day. It snowed the night before, a skiff of the fresh stuff dusting everything. Linda and I went down to the lake to retrieve our snow shovels from the shed. In a grove of large white spruce trees, right at the base of one of them, there was a small patch of fresh blood.

We both stopped in our tracks and stared at it. It was Linda who put it together first: "Oh no! It must be Squirrelly," she said.

As I stared at the bright blood on the fresh snow, I knew she was right. Something had gotten our beloved squirrel.

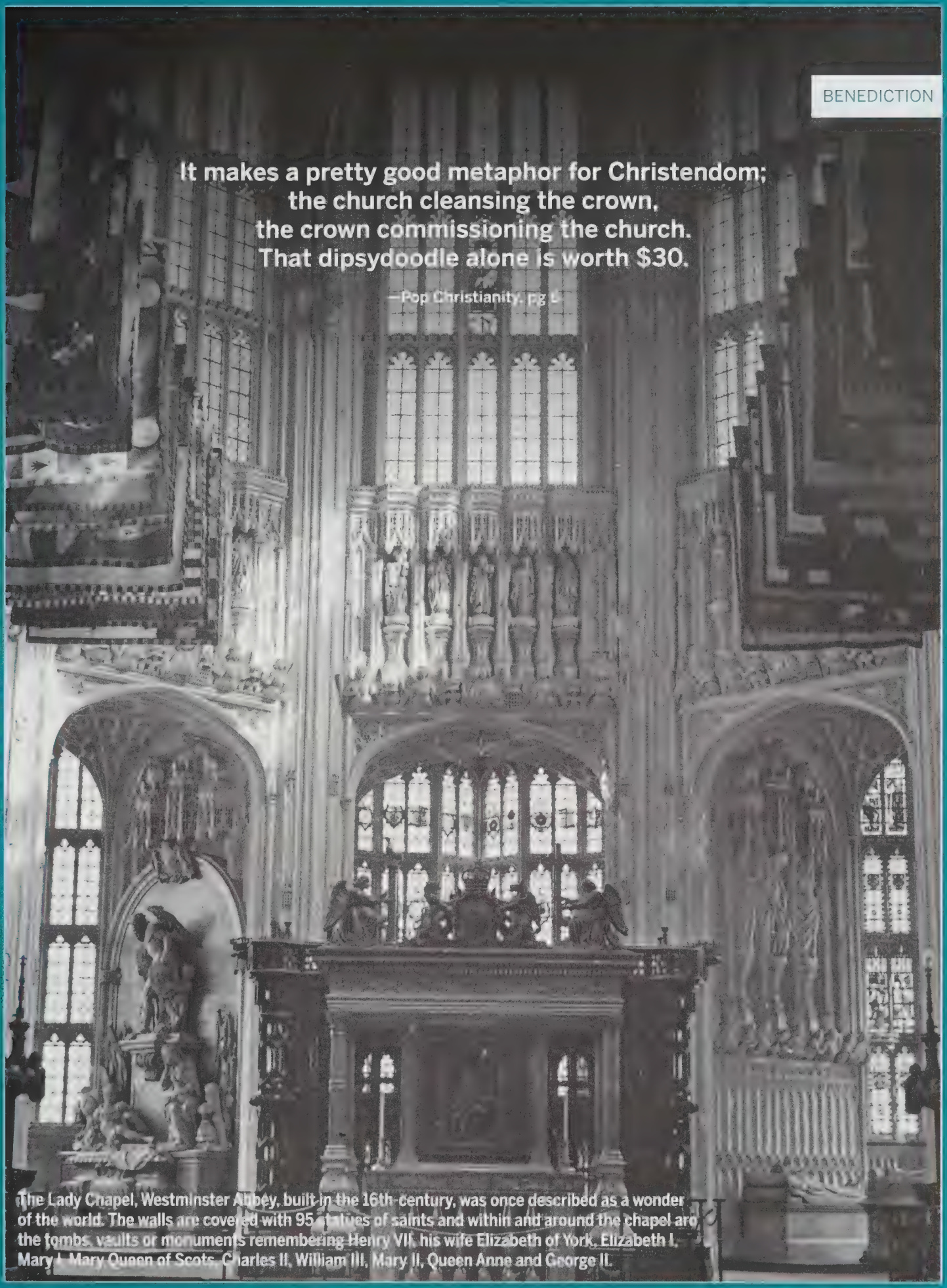
"It must have been a hawk or some kind of raptor," I said.

"You mean Squirrelly got raptured?" Linda said. "But how? Squirrelly is, I mean was, so smart and agile. He ruled like a laird of the glen and this grove of spruce trees was not only his manor but it provided him with almost perfect protection."

"I think our squirrel got just a little too squirrelly," I said.

We watched for our beloved red squirrel for the rest of the day. Every time we let out Addy, she kept running up to the big spruce tree next to the house, bounding up on it with her front paws and staring up. It was where Squirrelly always hung out just to tease her.

The next day was a sad repeat of the first. From her perch on her dog bed, Addy diligently watched the bird feeders in the big spruce at the corner of our deck. She was pining away to see the squirrel that she loved to hate. Several times during the day, Linda and I would go to the window and sigh, "Oh, I just miss Squirrelly so much. He was › continued on page 47



It makes a pretty good metaphor for Christendom; the church cleansing the crown, the crown commissioning the church. That dipsydoodle alone is worth $30.

—Pop Christianity, pg 6

The Lady Chapel, Westminster Abbey, built in the 16th-century, was once described as a wonder of the world. The walls are covered with 95 statues of saints and within and around the chapel are the tombs, vaults or monuments remembering Henry VII, his wife Elizabeth of York, Elizabeth I, Mary I, Mary Queen of Scots, Charles II, William III, Mary II, Queen Anne and George II.

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Like me you've probably heard someone say they're "spiritual but not religious."

Maybe it's a friend; maybe it's you.

No one has told me they're "religious but not spiritual."
And let's hope that's not the case!
But I'm sure it is sometimes.

—Matthew Ruttan
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A Malawian in Canada

In a letter to his daughter, a minister offers a reflection on the church.

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FOR THE RECORD

Fear of Religion

Quebec's Charter of Values unmasks disturbing trends in Canada. By David Harris

Most of the commentary on the Quebec government's proposed Charter of Values has focused on Quebec, but it has unveiled more about Canada as a whole than just that part of our population in Quebec. And what has been unmasked is disturbing.

That the Parti Quebecois is using this charter in the main to stoke Quebec nationalism seems plain enough. It also goes along with those in the province who try to emulate whatever France does.

Given France's huge problems regarding its immigrant population—including the mere existence of far-right, racist politicians—this seems dubious at best.

But polls of Canadians regarding Quebec's proposals reveal troubling statistics. Only 47 per cent of Canadians disapprove of the proposed legislation to forbid religious headwear and symbols being worn by public officials. And an astonishing 42 per cent approve the idea, despite it being clearly anti-immigrant and anti-religion.

Moreover, one wonders just how much farther our major political parties will go in opposing the charter given that almost half of Conservatives and nearly 40 per cent of New Democrats favour the proposal, while not quite a third of Liberals do.

And while most pundits were

decrying the charter either for targeting immigrants or simply being unworkable, the anti-religion, secularist aspect was being lauded by some leading media pundits. *The Globe and Mail's* Doug Saunders approved the goal of creating a secular state and wrote about how he had "fired" a physician who during examinations would say, "God's will."

"Who wants a doctor whose faith resides in anything other than medicine?" he wrote, as if faith in science and faith in God were mutually exclusive. All my regular physicians, from different denominations and faiths, believe in God and they seem completely competent in their practice of medicine.

So the proposed charter seems to have revealed fear of The Other on the right and fear/anger/dismissiveness of religion on the left. None of this is good and it is startlingly devoid of underlying reasons.

Canada is already secular in the sense of religion not figuring in any obvious way in governance and law (the ambiguous "supremacy of God" in the Preamble to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms notwithstanding).

Not only are Canadians free to worship who and what they will, they are free not to worship any being. The government does not support religion, although religious institutions get breaks on property taxes—a fair exchange for being the largest deliverers of community services after the government itself.

And when was the last time you heard of a public servant try to proselytize someone?

And in this nation of immigrants—only one in 40 Canadians is recognized as aboriginal—which is thriving in every sense of the word, its cities the envy of many, where is there cause to fear the religion of newer immigrants?

I'm sure the vast majority of Canadians want the government to be neutral with respect to religion. And it is. Which means there is clearly some work to be done in addressing irrational fears.

David Harris is the Record's *publisher and editor.*

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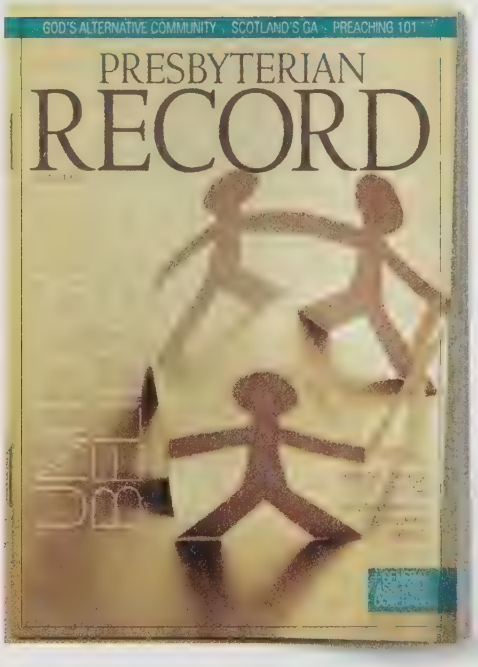


Stand Up for Faith

Re Some Thoughts on Islam, Letters, July/August

This is what is wrong with a lot of Presbyterians—they will not stand up for their faith and reject others. Where in the Bible does it say that Christ was accepting of all religions? If a lot of people in a congregation believe the same, then I think Christ would come in and overturn the communion table in the church and throw them all out. After all he did say, go out in the world and baptize them all.

SAM RAMAN-NAIR, VIA EMAIL

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Re Best Practices, May

Last week, on Sunday afternoon, I made myself a small salad and had more reason than ever to say grace. The salad greens were from the church garden, an experiment brought to reality by several new moms in the congregation. The garden has been framed and placed on top of the existing lawn, in case it has to be dismantled. Every Sunday this summer, there have been carefully picked and washed greens that taste considerably better than anything from a store. Everything is lovingly tended.

What I am most grateful for? About a year ago, one Sunday in church I noticed a man sitting by himself. I'm definitely one of those people who would rather speak with people I know than people I don't; however, I have an uncle who told me that "a stranger is just a friend you haven't met yet," and a friend who told me how important it is to welcome new people if they are visiting for the first time and invite them back.

So, even though it was uncomfortable, I introduced myself to him. Then we talked to the minister and just about everyone else. In fact, by the time fellowship hour was almost over, someone asked me how long I had known him and how we became friends! He came back, and brought his wife and young daughter. Members of their extended family have come and their daughter is a vibrant fixture amongst the tight-knit preschool "mini-church" that seems to have a life of its own!

The church garden is thriving because it has been carefully tended, watered and culled by a couple of the moms of the little children. One of them is the wife of the family that I welcomed. The garden is a good example of purpose, passion and good practices and it's a healthy green spot in the community.

So, my prayer over my salad was ›

one of thanksgiving and amazement for the blessings of being led to reach out. The next time there's a new face in a pew, introduce yourself. People I have welcomed say they have come back because of the warm initial welcome!

EMILY GAYLE AITKEN, TORONTO

A Good Ambassador

Re Love Your Neighbour, July/August

Thank you, Michael Yen for sharing with the wider church. Hebrews 12:1 talks about the faithful being "surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses." For most believers, this phrase remains figurative and imaginative, except for an occasional glimpse for those blessed enough to join a large gathering of saints—General Assembly being one such occasion. Your question about how best to respond to God's love and grace is relevant and contextual to every congregation. I like your own answer about staying simple—to love our neighbours, and to meditate on the words of God. At Taiwanese Robert Campbell PC, we are so proud to have you as the youngest elder (in its history, I believe) and as a representative to the wider Presbyterian community.

REV. PAUL WU, MONTREAL

God's Guidance is Good

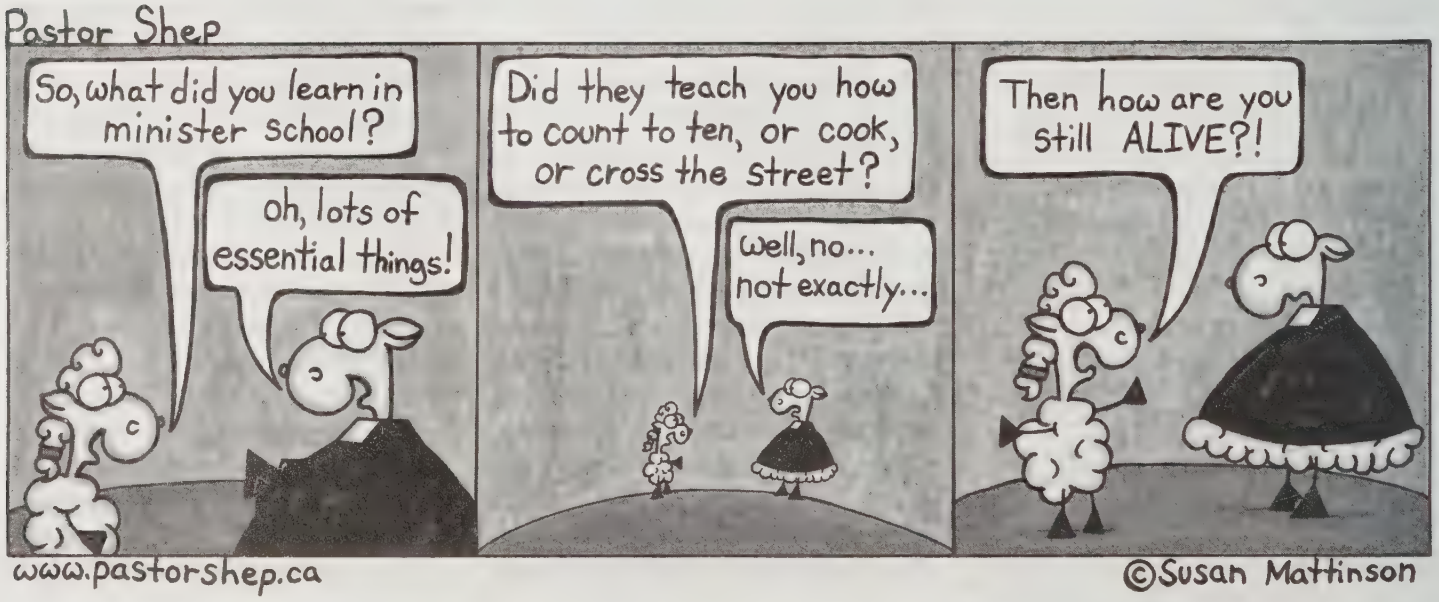
Several years ago I started an internet search for a cousin whose existence was no more than a rumour. In the 1930s, my mother's oldest brother disagreed with his Scottish family over his choice of bride. He moved away and was never heard from again. Towards the end of her life, my mother started to look for him, but, without the availability of the internet, she was unsuccessful.

I started looking at the various family members' birth, marriage and death certificates, as well as military records, because once you start looking for data it is so easy to digress and to discover more about your ancestors. Hours seem to pass by in a moment. It stood out to me that a lot of them were listed as Presbyterian. When I was a child we moved a lot but my mother favoured our attendance at a Presbyterian church, if one was nearby.

Since our marriage, my husband and I have attended several different churches, first in England and then in Canada. Although providing spiritual sustenance, I felt there was still something missing at the church I was currently attending. I took my concerns to the Lord in prayer, and I heard, "Go back to your Presbyterian roots" very clearly. Now I had a new challenge! I enjoyed teaching Sunday school each week at the church I was attending, so how could I find a Presbyterian church to go to—would I have to take a Sunday morning once a month to go to a Presbyterian church? What I needed was one that was open on Sunday evening and was in my end of the city. What were my chances of finding that? I also believed that if God wanted me to go to one, there would be a solution to my predicament, and that He would reveal it to me.

I retrieved a local weekly newspaper from our recycling box. I knew that some churches were listed in it. And there it was: Barrhaven Presbyterian Church. Worship on Sundays at 6 p.m. There was also a website. I laughed. The Lord is amazing. I know we know it, but there are times when you are just in awe of what God does.

I told my husband that we had to go to this church on Sunday because of how the Lord had answered my prayer. First, we looked at the website and listened to a recording of a previous week's message. It helped us to get a sense of what the church was like. That Sunday we attended the church and enjoyed



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the service. I like structured services, and hymns played on a piano. People were friendly and I found out that it is a new church, and intent on growing strong roots in Barrhaven.

It is exciting to be going to a church that has so much potential to grow and flourish. Every church has so much to offer to its community, and the community can reciprocate by supporting the church. Every time you can share and show the love of the Lord, it is a blessing. Perhaps you don't think that you have anything to offer, but God gives us all gifts that we can share with others. Please don't keep yours to yourself.

I started this by writing about my search for a possible cousin. Do I have a cousin? Yes, I do. I found him after a three-year search. Like me, he is an only child and we have been emailing back and forth and have exchanged photos. I hope to meet him one day. It was also wonderful to see what my uncle and aunt looked like. The sad part was that when my mother started looking for her brother he had already passed away.

MARION ROSS, NEPEAN, ONT.

Don't Stop Pretending

Re I'll Stop Pretending to Be a Christian, Encrusted Words, Online Blog

You seem to have missed Kierkegaard's point entirely. You can go to church fully enamored with Jesus, you can read the Bible to the exclusion of all other books, you can spend all your money on Christ's mission and welcome your Christian sisters and brothers into your home every day, and you will *still* only be pretending to be Christian. That's all we can do—pretend. That's all Kierkegaard ever thought he was doing. He saw claiming the title of Christian as a sort of arrogance.

You, however, seem to be suggesting we throw the baby out with the bathwater, a put-up-or-shut-up approach to Christianity. I don't know how you've developed these canonical standards of what good Christians must do to stay in the club, but they seem arbitrary. Nice qualities to have, I suppose, but none of them are prerequisites for faith. Sure, Jesus told one rich, young man that the price to follow him was to sell all he had and give it to the poor, but if you read the gospels and come away thinking that Jesus wanted full devotion and nothing less, I think you've missed the point. He was willing to take people as they were, spotty church attendance records and all.

Don't stop pretending to be Christian; it's the only way of being Christian in our world. Stop assuming that being Christian is an attainable goal; love God and His creation as best you can; and accept that the gift of your imperfect, far-from-Christian life is still a gift, nonetheless.

J.W., ONLINE

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ehm 100 YEARS

Urgently needed items for the Fall

Clothing Items:
New socks and underwear for both men and women, t-shirts, running shoes for men and women, blue jeans, sweat pants.

Personal Necessities:
Disposable razors, deodorant, sunscreen, feminine products, toothpaste and toothbrushes, individual packages of tissues, hairbrushes and combs, small containers of shampoo and conditioner.

Food and Kitchen Items:
Powdered milk, plastic kitchen utensils, sweetener, plastic wrap, aluminum foil, paper plates, pasta, rice, peanut butter, pasta sauce, and all canned food.

Miscellaneous:
Canadian Tire Money, gift certificates, Tim Horton gift cards, school supplies and art supplies, TTC tokens – Adult, Seniors and Students

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The World I Live In

A snapshot from Facebook. By Andrew Faiz

Here, from the moment as I write this, on the last Friday of summer, are the stories posted by friends on my Facebook news feed: A rant about dog hair, a joke about the annual Air Show at the Canadian National Exhibition ("Fighter planes over my house..."), nine questions you were afraid to ask about Syria, an article about a super athlete, a short film about a friend fighting cancer, Lake Erie from space ("Basically a dead zone"), the Sam the Record Man sign in Toronto gone for good, several articles on Seamus Heaney, Canada's Perfect Woman beauty contest winner, Israeli soldiers and Palestinians join in dancing Gangnam Style, how to live on a low budget in Toronto, David Cameron defends himself for not leading the charge in Syria, Introverts: Caring For Dandelions, 10 Worst Music Genre Names, everyone needs to stop using crack to describe their favourite things, the Beer Store policy on how many times a person can buy beer in a day, why Obama should not lead the charge in Syria, a clip from *Shoah*, a Facebook post allegedly by Assad's son dares Americans to attack, a friend boasting on a painting done by a friend featuring another friend, holiday photos, photos from previous holidays, a rant about Bell service, Lena Dunham used to look in the mirror and say, "I'm just so beautiful," A single protein may help explain memory loss, Facebook's new face recognition initiative, Dear Son, don't let Robin Thicke be a lesson to you, 10 most popular teacher tools this year, a friend announcing he's going to be on the radio talking about One Direction's "one dimensional 3D film debut," the Middle East explained in one (sort of terrifying) chart, a friend remembering her father who died five years ago on this day and a "note to self: wearing flip-flops to a manual car wash is a bad idea."

Toking politicians may be more important than Syria, or a friend struggling with cancer more important than a dead Great Lake, but all of these are a part of your life

This is a snapshot of the world I live in, with concerns ranging from another impending war (Syria) to walking on a soapy floor in flip-flops. If I had picked from the newsfeed yesterday there would have been articles and jokes about Toronto Mayor Rob Ford, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and Liberal MP Justin Trudeau joined as pot smokers. Two days ago was National Bow Tie Day. Three days ago, there was heated conversation on Miley Cyrus' twerking on a televised awards show. For the past month there have been intense discussions on the implications of Robin Thicke's song "Blurred Lines," the much declared Song of the Summer.

(I stepped away from writing this to answer some emails, get a glass of water, surf some more on Facebook; I just learned from a refreshed newsfeed that a friend proposed marriage years ago while watching *Saturday Night at the Movies* on TVOntario.)

This is a snapshot of the world you live in. Personal, global, environmental, social. It's a confused and complicated mixture of interests. For you, toking politicians may be more important than Syria, or a friend struggling with cancer more important than a dead Great Lake, but all of these are a part of your life. As a father of a tween girl, I am deeply concerned about the sexualized images in pop culture.

And all of this we bring, one way or another, to our prayers and to our meditations and to our communal worship on Sundays. In all of this is our profession of faith and for all of this we need constant guidance from our spiritual leaders.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *managing editor.*

BULLETIN

COMMUNITY and WORLD NEWS

PHOTO: EROGER ANIS/CP IMAGES

Egyptian Christians clean the chapel of Virgin Mary and St. Abraam Monastery, Dalga, Egypt.

Egypt's Upheaval

Violence against Christians is 'terrorism.'

By Amy MacLachlan

Amidst the political upheaval and social unrest that has gripped Egypt for the past several years, Christians are becoming increasingly fearful for their safety. According to Presbyterian minister Rev. Sameh Hanna, senior associate pastor at Kasr El Dobara Evangelical Church in Cairo, churches are being burned and Christians are being injured and killed in the attacks.

"I was hoping to send to you some encouraging ministry news from Egypt ... however, due to the violence that erupted today in many cities in Egypt, we are in dire need for your prayers," Hanna wrote in an email to church offices on Aug. 15.

"We are all safe, but we had to close the church today and call for all members to pray in small home groups."

Hanna's 7,800-member church is in Tahrir Square, where protests broke out back in Jan. 2011. Former president Hosni Mubarak stepped down from his post, and the country was poised for radical change following a democratic election.

Mohamed Morsi, a leader of the Islamist group, the Muslim Brotherhood, became Egypt's first democratically elected president in 2012, but it wasn't long before he was criticized for putting his organization's interests above those of the country, and granting himself sweeping executive powers. Millions of Egyptians demanded his resignation.

On July 3, Morsi was ousted by the military. His supporters protested. When police dispersed the 10,000-strong sit-in in Tahrir Square, which had been virtually taken over by protesters for six weeks, the violence escalated. A state of emergency was declared on Aug. 14.

"What happened from the Muslim Brotherhood and the fundamentalist groups today in Egypt was a whole new chapter of the great 'fall of masks' that we've been ›

continued...

witnessing in Egypt for more than two years now; the sad part is that the reality is so ugly," wrote Hanna.

A friend of Hanna's, who is a Presbyterian elder in the southern province of Assiut, reported that one of his church's members was killed when protesters attacked the church. Allies of the Muslim Brotherhood have been not only burning churches, but homes, hotels and shops owned by Christians.

"Violence can no longer be alleged to anything but terrorism," said Hanna.

Despite this, Hanna is hopeful for change, noting that a committee is now tasked with writing a new constitution. "We're praying for a constitution that supports democratisation as well as secures freedom to people and even more importantly, not to be based on any religious reference," he said.

Hanna came to Toronto in 1998 and began the Arabic Outreach Ministry under the Presbytery of East Toronto. He once again resides in his native land.

"Thank you for your continuous prayers for Egypt," he continued. "They are greatly needed."

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *senior writer.*

Prayers for Peace

As the United States considered military strikes against Syria, churches across the globe called for prayer.

The heads of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the World Council of Churches and Pope Francis were among those who asked for prayers to be offered on Sept. 7.

In open letters, they condemned an alleged gas attack by Syrian government forces on Aug. 21, yet urged restraint as the U.S. and other nations considered how to respond.

"However heinous the chemical attacks are, military response is not the answer," Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, general secretary of the WCRC wrote. "Military response can only serve to increase the suffering of the peoples of Syria who have already suffered so much."

"The crime of using chemical weapons is to be thoroughly investigated and prosecuted," wrote Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, the WCC's general secretary, in an open letter to the members of the UN Security Council. "However, an attack from outside Syria is likely to increase suffering and the risk of more sectarian violence, threatening every community in the nation including Christians. At this crucial time, the people of Syria and the Middle East need peace and not war."

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a member of the WCRC and WCC. *—Connie Wardle*

PHOTO: ERIC VANDEVILLE/ABACAPRESS.COM

Pope Francis called for reconciliation in Syria as he led a mass peace vigil in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Sept. 7.

MONUMENT AT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SITE HONOURS CHILDREN

By Connie Wardle

Representatives from the Presbyterian Church, local aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities, and residential school survivors together dedicated a monument at the site of Cecilia Jeffrey residential school on Aug. 14.

On a large rock in the centre of the monument a brass plaque reads: "In honour of all the children." Beneath the stone, a time capsule contains toys the schoolchildren played with, including bottle caps, elastic bands, ribbons and marbles. It was built by the Treaty 3 Tribal Council.

"The space is inviting to families so the children of today can ask 'What do these stones mean?' and hear from their parents and grandparents about the residential schools and Cecilia Jeffrey in particular," wrote Rev. Peter Bush, who

NEW INTERN NAMED

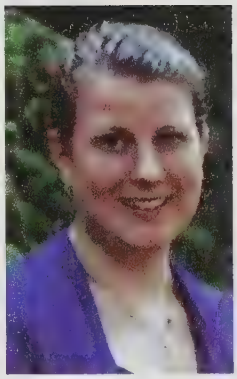
Partnership continues.
By Amy MacLachlan

Charmila Ireland is the fifth intern to participate in an eight-month peace and human security internship at the ecumenical peace organization, Project Ploughshares in Waterloo, Ont. The position is part of a partnership between the organization and the Presbyterian Church. She began work Sept. 3.

"A world at peace is something we all should be working towards and I'm very happy to be a part of the effort to get there," Ireland told the *Record*.

A member at Knox, Teeswater, Ont., Ireland completed her undergraduate studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ont., and is currently studying at Knox College, Toronto, towards her Master of Divinity degree. At Ploughshares, she hopes to learn more about conflict around the world, and what can be done to help.

The internship program gives young Presbyterians an opportunity to participate in the life and work of an ecumenical agency supported by the church. Funding is made possible through undesignated bequests to the PCC.



Founded in 1976, Project Ploughshares is the peace centre of the Canadian Council of Churches. Its mandate is to work with churches, governments, and civil society in Canada and abroad to advance policies and actions that prevent war and armed violence and build peace.

For more about the Peace and Human Security Internship Program, contact Katharine Masterton at kmasterton@presbyterian.ca or 1-800-619-7301.

—with files from Justice Ministries

along with Ina Borger represented the church at the dedication ceremony.

"As we were leaving a woman came up and thanked me for my words," Bush said. "She said she and her husband had received their compensation payments along with a letter from the Presbyterian Church including parts of the denomination's 1994 Confession. 'But,' she said, 'that seemed unreal; your words today gave the apology a human face. Thank you.' And then she hugged me."

The church was in charge of the school from 1902 until the federal government took over in 1969. It was first located at Shoal Lake from 1902 to 1929, and then moved to Round Lake, near Kenora, Ont. It ceased operating in 1976. *—with files from Peter Bush*

How-To Worship Videos on YouTube

Fundraising is underway for an innovative online video project called Break into Song, designed to help worship leaders learn how to teach new music. The project was conceived by Hilary Seraph Donaldson, who attends St. Andrew's Humber Heights, Toronto. She is a church musician and graduate student with degrees in theatre and sacred music.

"As a church musician, I'm motivated by the belief that congregational song is formational, as well as transformational, in our communities," Donaldson told the *Record*. "I wanted to find a way to make use of the accessible format of YouTube to reach out to other church musicians and ministers, and support and inspire them in their ministries. I hope that this free resource will help give worship leaders confidence to continually engage with new worship songs, and foster vital congregational singing."

With a choir and a congregation to help demonstrate techniques and challenges, each video will unpack new music, and show creative ways to teach it and use it in worship. Donaldson noted that, as the project is meant to support communities, she's "keen to start a dialogue on what communities need and want to feel confident—and joyful—as they learn new music together in worship."

For more information, or to donate to the production of these videos, visit breakintosong.ca. *—AM*

A True Servant

Rev. Dr. Ken McMillan dies at age 97.

By Amy MacLachlan and Seth Veenstra

One of the Presbyterian Church's oldest, and perhaps most revered, members passed away on Aug. 25 in Toronto. Rev. Dr. Kenneth McMillan, a member of the Order of Canada and past moderator of the PCC, died at the age of 97.

McMillan spoke with the *Record* in April at his home in Toronto. What follows are his thoughts and reflections on his life and the church, taken mostly from that conversation.

From 1942 to 1957, McMillan served congregations in Burgoyne, Niagara Falls and Guelph, Ont. But at age 40, he left pastoral ministry to work for the Canadian Bible Society.

"People said, 'you're ruining your career.' Well I wasn't worried about my career. You see when I was a youth I surrendered my life to Christ. And God has carried me all these years, that's the simple fact. I was a farm boy with no particular gifts if I can say so. But if you're available to God—well, you see, it's not your ability but your availability. I wanted to do God's will and that's what happened."

"When I was a youth I surrendered my life to Christ. And God has carried me all these years"

With two little girls at home, McMillan's wife, Isobel wasn't too excited about him switching jobs. The presbytery didn't want him to go either, but McMillan felt God's call.

"I took the job and it was hard going. The first five years were rough; things were bad at the Canadian Bible Society. But gradually it got better. I was there 26 years. And we had a marvelous ministry together."

After he retired from CBS he approached the head of World Vision. "I told him I was available and he hired me in 15 minutes. And I was there 27 years. I had a wonderful time at World Vision. I admired the leaders; they were all so dedicated."

As McMillan spoke, he returned to a common refrain: "Everything seems to me just one blessing after another," he said, ending each of his stories with, "I'm just so blessed."

At seminary, he learned from one of the greats. "When I was at Knox College we had three or four professors and hardly any staff. When I was there the great man was Dr. [Walter] Bryden. He was the one who molded us. We'd come out of a lecture never having taken a note, it was so tense. He had a tremendous influence on us all."

McMillan was recently awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for his "distinguished service." This came after receiving the Queen's Gold Jubilee Medal in 2002, and being appointed to the Order of Canada in 1984.

Still, he remained humble about his accomplishments. In his autobiography, *All Things Are Possible* he argues he has lived "the life of a very ordinary person, with limited gifts, who managed to have a very good life."

"My attitude is more important than my ability, my friends, my education, or what happens to me," he continues in his book. "Knowing, truly believing, that God loves us changes everything. It is the basis of my real self-worth."

When he spoke with the *Record*, he was in excellent spirits, and was working on editing a variety of books. He said he was very healthy—his only medication "an aspirin a day." Every day he rose at six a.m., exercised half an hour, ate a banana and two oranges, then read four devotions.

He went on to say, "The minister's spiritual life is very important. People aren't interested in what you know, they're interested in who you are. A minister's life speaks.

"A minister is a servant; that's the primary thing. If you're not prepared to be a servant and identify with the people, you shouldn't be a minister. You're not above them, you're with them."

This idea of community, of connection, of love and servanthood, seemed to be of particular importance to McMillan. In a letter sent a day after the interview, he wrote:

"Religion is about rules. Christianity is about relationships—our relationship to God and our relationship to people. The church of the future will have an absence of religion. It will focus on God's love for the world, and let the love of God flow through it into the lives of people."

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *senior writer. Seth Veenstra is a freelance writer in Hamilton, Ont.*

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GETTY IMAGES

THEOLOGY 101

Walking the Talk

Letting go so we can love others. By Iain Nichol

Living Faith 8.1

***Living Faith* notes** that discipleship is a way of being and doing, which calls for obedience to Christ's commandment to love God and one's neighbour. Clearly, this is not a way for persons and groups motivated solely by self-interest.

In this matter, the initiative is with God. God is the One who first loves (1 John: 4:19). God takes the initiative. By the power of God's love in Christ, namely, by God's grace, our love toward God and neighbour is ›

evoked. Such love is not self-generated. God's love for us brings to birth our love for God. (In this sense we are born again—and again). It also sets us free to love God and freely obey the commandment to love our neighbour. We can say "freely" because the love is not coerced. Can any love worth the name be coerced? No. We respond freely and in kind to the enduring and all-embracing good will (benevolence) of God, and by willing and "doing the truth" of this love in care and compassion toward our neighbour. The teacher's first lesson to his disciples? That the God he called Father wills nothing other than the good of all things in heaven and on earth.

The first disciples heard Christ's voice as a calling out or a calling away. Matthew tells us that when Jesus called Simon Peter and Andrew "immediately they left their nets and followed him." In the same way, Matthew continues, James and his brother John left their boat and their father (Matthew 4:18-22). The *ekklesia* (those called out) of four was soon to become the *ekklesia* of 12, the infant church. Today, in a similar way, Christ's call is mediated to us. It comes to us in and through the community of those called out, in and through the church's worship and practices (*Living Faith* 8.1.2).

Consider the sacrament of baptism. This sacrament is also an act of discipleship (*Living Faith* 7.6.4). It is the sign and seal of dying to sin and rising to the new life in Christ, and of our being called out and away from that twilit far country into the welcoming fellowship of the household of God. It is the sacrament in and through which by the power of God's grace we make the transition from the old way of being to the new. It marks the public beginning of a lifelong process of learning to be Christ's followers; namely, of "learning to know whose child you are" (*Book of Praise* 521).

Sometimes we wonder about Simon Peter, Andrew, and the long succession of disciples who also consented to be called away. Did Jesus not care that they may have had families to clothe and feed, mothers and fathers to honour, boats to be maintained and kept seaworthy? Of course he cared. He does not disparage the family as such, nor possessions as such. Rather, the calling of the disciples involves learning that they belong from first to last not to one's possessions, not to one's spouse, not even to one's family or clan or nation, but to the God whose children we truly are and to whom we belong in life and in death. Martin Luther caught the essence of the matter when with characteristic vigour he defined God's call to discipleship as "the summons that rings above all earthly goods, all earthly love" (*Book of Praise* 315). This hymn is one of powerful support and encouragement to Christ's followers. We may ask ourselves whether we too have "let go" and therefore can sing it with anything like the same conviction as its author.

The disciples were not prepared for the suffering and death of their teacher. They lost their nerve. Jesus was betrayed, denied and left abandoned and alone by his erstwhile companions to endure a cruel death. But surely they were much less prepared for a love infinitely stronger than death, a love that raised him to leave a tomb empty and to empower them to press on. Having been called and having learned to walk the talk, the disciples now continue their journey as those sent out to teach and baptize. Sent forth as his apostles in the light of Jesus' promise: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age," they have a mission to fulfil (Matthew 28:18-20). So, the journey continues in the power of this risen love, the love of Christ their teacher who had been their travelling companion from the very beginning.

Today we also have a mission. Churches engage in this mission to love God and our neighbour in various practical ways: by supporting Out of the Cold programs, and donating and distributing food and clothing to people in need. They support many kinds of local and international relief organizations. Their mission is both local and global. It also involves resistance to those evil powers that conspire to frustrate and destroy the peace, justice and joy of God's reign that is both present among us and to come. Having learned to pray, Christ's disciples have the audacity to resist such powers not by adopting the policy of "an eye for an eye" but by "doing the truth" in "bringing good news to the oppressed, binding up the brokenhearted, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and releasing the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 25:31-46). And when his disciples even have the audacity to pray for evildoers and persecutors they take on the whole world. Such labours of love as these are never lost.

Abiding in the love that sets Christ's disciples free to love, may they do justice and bring hope, healing and peace. And for the love that is "new every morning," (*Book of Praise* 815) may God keep us alert, prepared, faithful and loving as we walk the talk.

Today we also have a mission. Churches engage in this mission to love God and our neighbour in various practical ways

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Rev. Dr. Iain Nicol is professor emeritus at Knox College, Toronto, and a former director of the Toronto School of Theology.

GETTY IMAGES

Chromolithograph c1860.

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

God of Justice

It's okay to be angry. By Alex Bisset

Psalm 137 is a familiar text and when I read it, I can't help but hear Boney M singing in my mind. Jerusalem has been destroyed and many of its inhabitants killed. The Babylonians have rounded up all those worth taking into exile and are leading them on a forced march to Babylon. At a resting place beside a river, the soldiers ask for some entertainment from their captives: a song, perhaps, maybe one that praises God, or one that says how ›

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When innocent lives are taken, when children are abused, when violence abounds, we should be angry

beautiful Jerusalem was. But the people refuse, saying that they cannot sing one of the songs of God when Jerusalem is in ruins and they are captives in a foreign land. In protest, they hang up their harps on the trees that line the river. (These trees were likely poplars, but the King James Version translated the word as "willow," and for that reason the great Swedish botanist Linnaeus gave the weeping willow the taxonomic name *Salix babylonica*.)

That's the familiar part of this psalm, the part that Boney M sang, the part that touches us all in times of grief and loneliness and separation. But then, if we don't stop reading or listening soon enough, there comes the part of the psalm that we don't know as well. The psalmist expresses the hope that, should they ever forget Jerusalem, or ever set any other joy above Jerusalem, their tongue will be stuck to the roof of their mouth, like someone who has eaten too much peanut butter, so that they can never sing again. The writer remembers the cries of those who pillaged the city of Jerusalem, calling them Edomites (an ancient enemy of the people of Israel), and prays that God will never forget what these people have done to God's city. And then come the words that make us flinch:

O daughter Babylon, you devastator!
Happy shall they be who pay you
back what you have done to us!
Happy shall they be who take
your little ones
and dash them against the rock!

We shudder at the expression of such violence against children, against the idea of such deadly revenge. And so we should. There is no place in our lives or in the church for such actions.

But while there is no place for such actions, there is a place in our lives and in the church for the expression of feelings of anger at appropriate times. We sometimes seem to suggest that Christians should be nice people, and the church should be a nice place, and since anger is not a nice thing, it does not belong in the church. But there is ample evidence in the Bible to suggest that God can, at times, be angry and I think that we too should be free to express our anger at the kinds of things that also anger God.

When atrocities happen, when innocent lives are taken, when children are abused, when violence abounds, we should be angry. And that anger might even involve wishing that God or someone else would set things right; would do the kinds of things to the aggressors that they have done to us or to others. I don't believe that there is anything wrong with such a wish as long as it is just a wish and we aren't planning to act on it or intending that anyone else will act on it either. The writer of Psalm 137 is not in a position to exact revenge for the destruction of all that is dear to them, and neither are any of their friends. All they can do is cry out to God and hope that someday God will execute justice on their behalf. Anger may not exactly be a Christian virtue, but it is an emotion that all of us have, and vocalizing our anger to God is far healthier than trying to bottle it up and keep it inside us. By voicing that anger, we renew our trust that the God of justice, who is also the God of mercy, will ultimately set things right.

Alex Bisset is minister at Riverdale and Westminster, Toronto.

GETTY IMAGES

RENEWAL

The "Where" of Renewal

Looking to the margins. By Peter Bush

The renewal of the church will not come from human plans or resolutions from General Assembly. Human beings and General Assemblies can gesture towards signs of renewal, but renewal will not come from places of power and authority; rather, renewal will come from the edge, the outside, the places no one pays attention to.

In the late 200s, the church was renewed as God called out men and women to go live on the edge, between the desert and civilization, in North Africa. There they prayed. No one thought these desert fathers and mothers were the future of the church, but they were. In 1204, the heir to a fabric empire walked into the town square in Assisi, Italy, and literally stripping naked, left behind his status and security to follow God; and the name Francis of Assisi still reminds hearers of the power of following God unreservedly. Wittenberg, Germany, was ›

RENEWAL, continued

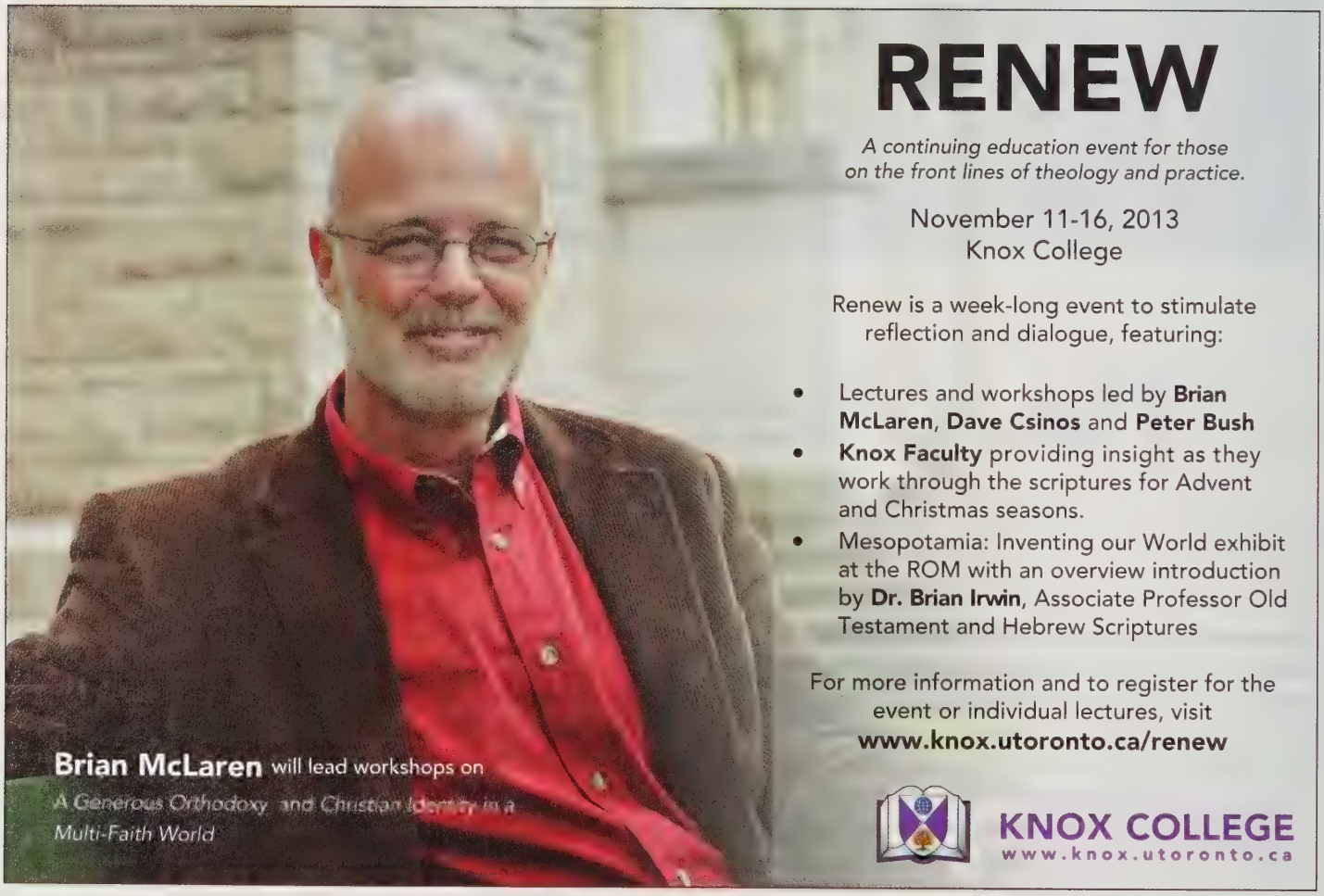
an insignificant town with a two-bit university, where an unimportant monk nailed 95 debating points to the door of the village church. It was not the way human beings would plan a Reformation, but it was God's way. John Wesley, educated in elite schools, was forced out of the established church because his preaching and pattern for church life did not fit the established model. Preaching to the poor and working classes in open fields was not how humans would have designed a plan to call a country back to God. But God used it to transform the English-speaking world. Azusa Street Church, the birthplace of the Pentecostal movement in North America, was a burnt out warehouse/stable in inner city Los Angeles. Could any good come from such a place? In God's economy the answer is, "yes."

Told this way, renewal sounds simple and straightforward. None of the transitions described were easy. Renewal is messy, full of questions and uncertainty. Yet the truth remains; the renewal of the church will come from the edge, the outside, the unexpected.

Where then are we to look for the renewal of the church? Where we least expect it. Could renewal be coming from a small rural church the presbytery wanted to close? Is there a new movement of the Spirit in an inner city congregation that had been given up for dead? Is a small group of the congregation's misfits meeting together and finding new depths and heights in faith?

Those may be the types of places where we see signs of renewal. Or from some other corner of the church. God is involved in renewal; we can be certain of that. God is doing unexpected things in unexpected places. Part of being open to renewal is for leaders, for people who have authority, to have the humility to not be at the centre of the renewal God will bring. Leaders are called to be willing to let the Spirit take leadership from their hands and give it to those who are outside, on the edge, from places no one pays attention to.

Rev. Peter Bush is minister at Westwood, Winnipeg.



GETTY IMAGES

BELIEF

A Great Mystery

We must believe in the resurrection. By Gwyneth Whilsmith

The faith is a great mystery to me and nothing about it is cut and dried. Frederick Buechner, the American Presbyterian author, says if we want to discover God, we must carefully listen to the events in our lives (even the most insignificant) because, he insists, that's where we'll find God. Mainly, my life just jogs along, not very exciting, with the usual ups and downs, the joys and sorrows, much like yours I expect. Still, I do know this: That on some rare occasions I have discerned something so beautifully untouchable and loving and quietly powerful, yet with a twinkle about it that I cannot deny or explain, and I believe I have been touched by Mystery.

Malcolm Muggeridge said he believed in prayer but didn't understand how it worked. That's about where I am on the subject. Long ago (when I was about 35 years of age), a young minister asked me to lead a group of teenagers. No way! I used every argument in the book: they were smarter than me; they wouldn't listen to me; I'd be hopeless and besides, I just didn't want to do it. He smiled and handed me a thick book saying ,"This is the teacher's guide, just study it and you'll be fine." Talk about throwing the Christians to the lions.

Well. The teenagers didn't turn out to be lions. They were very sweet and gentle with me and I did try to make each lesson as interesting as possible. We had some fine discussions where I learned as much from them as they did from me.

After a while, I decided we needed to branch out a little and I arranged for us to attend churches of other denominations, ›

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BELIEF, continued

including the Roman Catholic Church where the priest welcomed us and answered all the questions my kids put out to him. Then I contacted a rabbi in the city nearby and asked for an invitation to his synagogue. That too went well. Next I found the name of the imam at the largest mosque and he invited us to come one evening. And after a tour of the beautiful mosque, he invited us to a smaller room where some Muslim teenagers were expecting us. All the young people were a little uneasy but the barriers broke down as they began to discuss school and football games and music. Then the imam asked some of the Muslim youngsters to stand up and tell what they believed as Muslims. They did, reciting five precepts of their faith.

I grew increasingly uncomfortable, fearing he would ask some of my teenagers to do the same for Christianity. Thankfully, he didn't and we left, all good friends.

The next Sunday, however, I asked the youth why they came faithfully to our class every Sunday for an hour before the service. There were about a dozen of them and practically all replied, "Because my mother makes me." Try that for bringing down your ego.

Then I asked, "If you had to get up and tell why you're a Christian and what you believe, what would you say?" There was a long silence and downcast eyes. When I pressed them, most of them admitted they believed there was a God and someone called Jesus who was kind and loving. Did they believe in the resurrection? Well, now, that was a bit of a stretch, wasn't it? Someone coming to life again after he was dead? But then, their parents seemed to believe it so it might be true. They didn't know. (They were always honest.)

Now I wonder what I would say, or what you would say, if those questions were required of us? Do you remember that old poster: "If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

That young minister who helped me through my faith crisis told me, "There are a lot of things you don't have to believe, Gwyn; they're not important. But if you won't or can't believe in the resurrection you really can't call yourself a Christian because that is the foundation on which Christianity is based." He suggested I go to the Bible for answers.

And that's where my questions about the risen Christ were answered for all time. It was the complete turnaround of the disciples that did it. From scared, nervous, defeated weaklings they became bold, brave, confident, no-holds-barred followers of Jesus because they had seen the alive-again Jesus with their own eyes, had heard him with their own ears, and touched him and enjoyed breakfast with him on the beach. It wasn't a hallucination or a vision; they had even eaten the fish he cooked and served to them that morning. And the greatest thing was that he'd told them that although he had to leave them, he would always be with them. Imagine the tears of joy that welled up in their eyes. Strengthened with great courage, they became zealots who went out to pass on with born-again passion this good news everywhere they went and to anyone who would listen. Nothing could stop them. St. Paul, too, said something to the effect that if his listeners didn't believe that Jesus was risen and alive then they were a bunch of poor souls who were to be pitied. After Paul's experience on the road to Damascus there was no way he'd ever forget.

We don't have those "living" experiences, but still, many of us know there's something within that tells us that it is true; Jesus is risen, is still here, with all of us. Don't ask me how that's possible because I don't know. But that's part of the mystery.

Gwyneth Whilsmith is a contributing editor.

Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

FAMILY

In Circles

New beginnings are a connection to the past.

By Katie Munnik

As I write this, it's been a week since our newest little one arrived. He was born in the middle of our expat life in Edinburgh, at home in our rented apartment.

We're here—and specifically in this home—through a happy accident of academic opportunity and a tight student rental market. Edinburgh has long been on our list of places we'd like to live. It feels both far from familiar and close to our hearts. There's the Presbyterian heritage connection, but it is personal, too. My mother was born here in her granny's house, and my grandmother grew up in our current neighbourhood. This home is perfect for us—close to the university, close to the primary school, and with enough space for bookcases and family life. After almost two years, it still feels surprising how ›

The author's grandparents, Gordon and Anne Gray with her mother, Hilary Hay.

FAMILY, continued

For the past few months, she had been whispering into the bulk of my belly, telling the baby all sorts of secrets

well things have worked out. There is space to sit at the window where I can watch the kids playing outside. There is space to grow a few vegetables and a few flowers, too. My son has planted beans and he's been watching them daily as they extend their tendrils up and up the garden wall. All these are small things, but they make it home. And now, this is the home where our newest little one was born.

The house where my mother was born was also a rental house busy with children. My grandparents lived outside of town, but on a visit to the city, my gran's doctor told her to stay the night with her mother because it wasn't wise to get on the bus. And perhaps it wasn't. That night, there was an air raid by the Luftwaffe and my grandmother went into labour. She laboured in her parents' bedroom while the rest of the family were tucked away in the bomb shelter. It must have been an exciting night for her younger siblings. But perhaps the shelter wasn't quite soundproof because the story goes that one of her brothers asked her in the morning, "Did it hurt terribly, Annie?"

We were unsure about having our older children at home when the baby was born. We'd made arrangements with various friends to be on stand-by sleepover duty. But it was the middle of the night when contractions started and the kids were asleep. When morning came and the light peeked in through the window, my daughter woke up and knew that something exciting was happening in the house. I had reached one of those blissful spots in labour when you can rest for a while and let your heart catch up with your body. The Spouse brought her down the hall to see me.

When she came through the door, her eyes were wide and almost shy with wonder. For the past few months, she had been whispering into the bulk of my belly, telling the baby all sorts of secrets. In that quiet morning space, she just looked and looked and everything felt holy. Then quietly she asked if it was just like this when she was born. And I said yes. It was hard work and wonderful, and she smiled and we loved each other. Then the Spouse led her back to her room and her brother, and delivered breakfast in bed—muffins, strawberries and orange juice. A little while later, a friend collected them and then my real work started. Our baby was born just before 11 a.m.

In the week since then, I've been thinking about circles. Hours and days circle past me with the hands on the clock. I think about those who came before me and those who come afterwards.

A week ago, I walked these neighbourhood streets, my belly round, my grandmother's steps echoing ahead of me. It feels circular to think of my mother's birth, my grandmother's labour. But my mother was my grandmother's first child so—in a strange way—I'm a little ahead of her, turning the corner, as this is my third baby. And I am my mother's third child, too. Another turn. The baby's own circling has just begun, but already he is surrounded by love. It's his turn to begin and it's my turn again to mother a little one. I feel circled by blessing.

So we've given our little one my grandmother's maiden name. Something a little unusual, but it suits him well. And it suits us, too. Circumstances circle with all these happy accidents and quiet callings.

Katie Munnik is an Ottawa writer currently living in Edinburgh, Scotland, with her studying husband and three growing children. She blogs every Monday on the Messy Table at presbyterianrecord.ca.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KATIE MUNNIK

ISTOCK PHOTO

BOOK REVIEW

Negative Theology

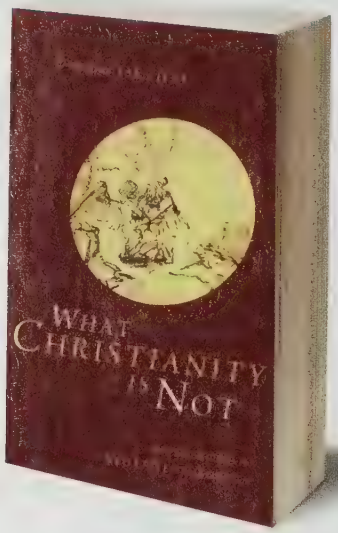
We know our faith by knowing what it's not. By Nick Athanasiadis

What Christianity Is Not: An Exercise in "Negative" Theology by Douglas John Hall (Cascade Books, 2013)

Christianity is not: "a culture-religion ... a religion of the book ... a doctrine ... a system of morality" nor is it "the church" or "the truth." Then what is Christianity?

In his latest volume, Douglas John Hall challenges us to think again about what Christianity might be or become. This is not a simple task—perhaps especially for those who still consider themselves to be within the church. Through six provocative negations, Hall takes us through parts of what have been considered to be of the essence or even the essence of Christianity only to tell us, no! Think again. The essence of what we believe as Christians is not contained in the term religion, or the Bible, or in a set of doctrines, or a moral system, or the church, or even "the truth." Indeed the heart of the faith is not some "thing" but some "One"—Jesus as the Christ.

Again one might answer, well yes of course, we all know that! Yet even here, we are tempted to comprehend what is, in essence, mystery. ›



We are tempted to comprehend what is, in essence, mystery

We think we know, but we don't know as much as we think we know. This reminder comes to us from one who has spent the better part of five decades in the study, the teaching and the living of the Christian faith.

Over two millennia, Christianity went from being the faith of a persecuted minority to the official religion of the Roman Empire; thereafter it became identified with the dominant culture. Through the Middle Ages and into the Modern Period, to be Christian was to be European and later to be Christian was to be an American, so that the culture of a particular people became almost synonymous with the religion. This symbiotic association is now over in most of the Western world.

But why has Hall written this book now? Why does he feel we need to hear these negations before we can affirm what we indeed believe? His first reason is offered in the dedication of his book, which is addressed to his grandchildren. He laments the "qualitative" loss which the Christian tradition has suffered. Not the "quantitative" losses, such as numbers of adherents and influence in high places, which are to be expected as Christianity no longer services the powers that be. Rather, what Hall laments is "the trivialization," "reduction" and "failure" of Christianity "to speak to the most complex problems and anxieties of human beings."

Another immediate reason Hall identifies for writing this book is symbolized in a sharp graffito scrawled on the wall of my alma mater, the Presbyterian College, Montreal, shortly after the events of 9/11: "Religion kills."

It will not do to respond that there are varieties of religious expression, some better than others. The reality we confront is that some expressions of religion are indeed dangerous. Their very practice is destructive. Hate is not too strong a word to describe what some of these ostensibly religious expressions espouse. Instead of a knee-jerk defensiveness, we as Christians are invited to look again at what we espouse, what is at the heart of our own faith, and what is not.

To enable us to be once more where we need to be, Hall takes the "negative" approach. In theological literature this is known as the *via negativa*, the way of negation, in contrast to the kataphatic or positive tradition which concentrates on who God is and what can be known of the divine. As the Latin word *via* implies, this is a way. A way of doing theology, a way of speaking about God, which evinces modesty especially with regard to any final pronouncements upon that which cannot finally be known, since the subject transcends not only all knowledge but also all categories of knowledge. This approach does not deny the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ who, as the gospels testify and the later ecumenical creeds confess, was "born ... suffered ... was crucified ... died ... and rose from the dead." Yet, this affirmation has too often been obscured in the historical practice of Christianity.

If we still think we can spout off our convictions with little sensitivity to those whose own backgrounds and circumstances challenge our convictions, we will be speaking to ourselves. We, who are now a shrinking demographic, will have no credible word for those outside our circle.

Having offered six negations, Hall brings us to the heart of the matter by sharing an image offered by Japanese novelist Shusaku Endo, in his novel *Silence*. Set in the 17th-century mission to Japan, a young Jesuit full of fire and steel in his heart seeks to stand firm in his faith while he witnesses to Christ in the "swamp of Japan." In the end he is captured and commanded to recant his faith by symbolically trampling on a bronze plaque of Christ's face. He refuses—until he realizes that several Japanese peasants, who have themselves renounced their faith many times over, are dependant for their freedom on the Jesuit's own renunciation. At that moment the disfigured face of Christ, trampled by so many feet, speaks. Christ speaks to the Jesuit for the first time: "Trample! Trample! ... it was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world." The Jesuit relents. And this, says Hall finally, is the clearing in the centre for which the negations made way. As we let go of what we claim to be essential, now especially as we are being divested of power, wealth and influence, now especially we may allow Christ himself to speak.

Rev. Dr. Nick Athanasiadis is minister at Leaside, Toronto.

GETTY IMAGES

MEDITATION

The Church of the Bonsai

We must bear fruit. By Joel Coppieters

I **know this confession** will fuel the fire of those who think my brain never leaves the church office, even on my day off, but sometimes a great object lesson is just too hard to resist. One of our latest escapades with our granddaughters brought Debbie and me to the Montreal Botanical Garden and its collection of bonsai trees, one of the largest outside of Asia. (Those reacting with sympathy to the plight of two little girls being dragged to the botanical garden for an afternoon should know that the object of the day was actually a visit to the live butterfly exhibit, and that the outing eventually degenerated into a snowball fight where Grandpa proved he can still throw a curveball!)

But back to our bonsai trees. The term bonsai comes from two Japanese words that literally mean a planting in a tray, or in a low-sided pot. The tradition, which finds parallels in several other Asian cultures, confines a growing tree to a series of small pots that restrict its growth, and uses pruning of the crown, the branches and the roots to produce over time what essentially appears to be a scaled down model of a fully grown tree. Some of the bonsai trees on display in Montreal are almost a century old, but are no larger than a small garden shrub.

When I first heard about bonsai, my initial reaction was that given our inclement Canadian weather, it would be great to have miniature fruit trees that could be more easily kept indoors to lengthen the period during which fresh fruit is locally available, but I quickly learned that the growth stunting process used in the art of bonsai is not friendly to fruit production. There is a completely different part of the agricultural sciences that focuses on developing dwarfed fruit trees where food production is the purpose, but ›

MEDITATION, continued

How do we respond to the fact that for many of our congregations, it has been years since we baptized a new adult disciple?

this is not the point with bonsai. The ancient art was meant to encourage contemplation through the beauty of the small tree, and it stressed the patient skill of the artist who crafted the trees over several decades with hundreds of small, measured cuts and prunings. While I don't want to risk being thought some kind of neanderthalic philistine with no appreciation for the finer, artistic, pretty things of life, I confess to being at a bit of a loss to understand the value of decades of slow, painstaking work that results in a tree that's sort of nice to look at, but in the end, produces no fruit, offers neither shade from the sun or shelter from the wind and will never play host to a bird's nest.

It struck me as I stood staring at one 90-year-old fruitless bonsai that perhaps many of our churches were very similar. Growth is often hampered because we keep them confined in small containers, never quite allowing them to stretch beyond the comfort of the four solid, stone walls of our beautiful gothic architecture. Hours, years and entire decades are invested in beautifying, trimming and clipping and making sure that every branch and every leaf looks just right and is perfectly balanced; but, those branches never bud into flower, and the flowers never yield fruit.

Much of the time, when we read the story of the early church in Acts and the Epistles, we focus on the fine theological details of what the church believed. We also spend a lot of time thinking about the structure and governance of the early church and the way these might be appropriately translated to our day and context. But we so often overlook the fact that the most frequently mentioned characteristic of the church in the book of Acts is the fact that she was a fruitful, growing church. From the outrageous outburst of Pentecost that added 3,000 people in a single day, to the steady stream of new disciples who joined the movement in every city the apostles visited, it quickly becomes clear that the church was a living, growing organism that was stretching and adding branches and producing fruit.

My most startling discovery about bonsai trees was that unlike dwarf fruit trees that are genetically engineered to be small, the bonsai artist starts with a regular specimen—a tree that has all the potential to grow and produce fruit, but that is prevented from doing so by restrictive containers and repeated pruning.

As we care for our buildings, we can spot the tell-tale signs of water infiltration in the basement and we respond before too much damage is done. We feel those cold drafts coming in around the side of the windows, and we quickly correct the insulation problem. We hear the out of tune organ and immediately call the tuner to tinker with the pipes until they are set just right. How do we respond to the fact that for many of our congregations, it has been years since we baptized a new adult disciple, or since we welcomed someone who was embracing the Christian faith and committing to following Jesus for the first time? As for any other living organism, growth and fruit should be the norm for our churches rather than the exception.

I wonder what Jesus would have thought about a beautiful, well groomed, perfectly maintained tree that was full of nicely manicured leaves ... but that produced no fruit?

Joel Coppieters serves with Côte des Neiges, Montreal, where there is much prayer and thought these days about how to serve and reach the increasingly needy urban community where they are called to minister.

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MUSIC REVIEW

The Way to Light

An excellent journey through the mystery of music. By Andrew Faiz

A Symmetry of Being,
The Sanctuary Wrecks
sanctuarywrecks.com

I listened to track six, "Morningside," on the way to my home church, Morningside Hig Park, Toronto, for worship. The track is written by the church's former minister. I had heard it several times previously, driving to Baysville, Ont., to pick up my daughter from Camp Glen Mhor.

While the whole album is evocative, rich in tones and textures, intricately constructed, this one song has stuck with me. Obviously, I was first attracted to it because it is about my church, but for the composer, Rev. Will Ingram, currently senior minister at St. Andrew's, King Street, Toronto, Morningside High Park is a community of friends. In a short poem he says of this composition: "The love of good friends/ Embracing life together/ Where the sun rises." And perhaps that is why this one song draws me in; it is about community, which makes it a richer experience of church.

You can hear the laughter, the joy of friends gathering. There is a wonderful arc to the music; it builds quietly and then recedes, never going away, like the rhythm of comfortable conversation. I don't want the track to end; I want to hear the next movement, see where the story is headed.

The next song, "Giant Shadows," was written after the death of Ingram's ›

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father-in-law. Are those castanets in this tune? Sure sounds like them, beating out a rhythm. Of this track Ingram has written: "Shadows fall across the path/ Show the way to light." How do shadows show the way to light? Close your eyes as you listen, the song will guide you.

A Symmetry of Being is written and recorded by Will Ingram and composer/ producer Marc Koecher, except for "Eclipse," which is based on a tune by Dominic Miller, guitarist for Sting. The musicianship is stellar throughout.

Each of the 10 pieces started with Ingram; they are personal meditations on life, death, friendship, love, nature. There are no lyrics, no words to tell you what the song is about. You have the music, and if you want, Ingram's brief descriptions of each one on sanctuarywrecks.com. You have to work a little harder, close your eyes, let the music wash over you, and then insert yourself into the song.

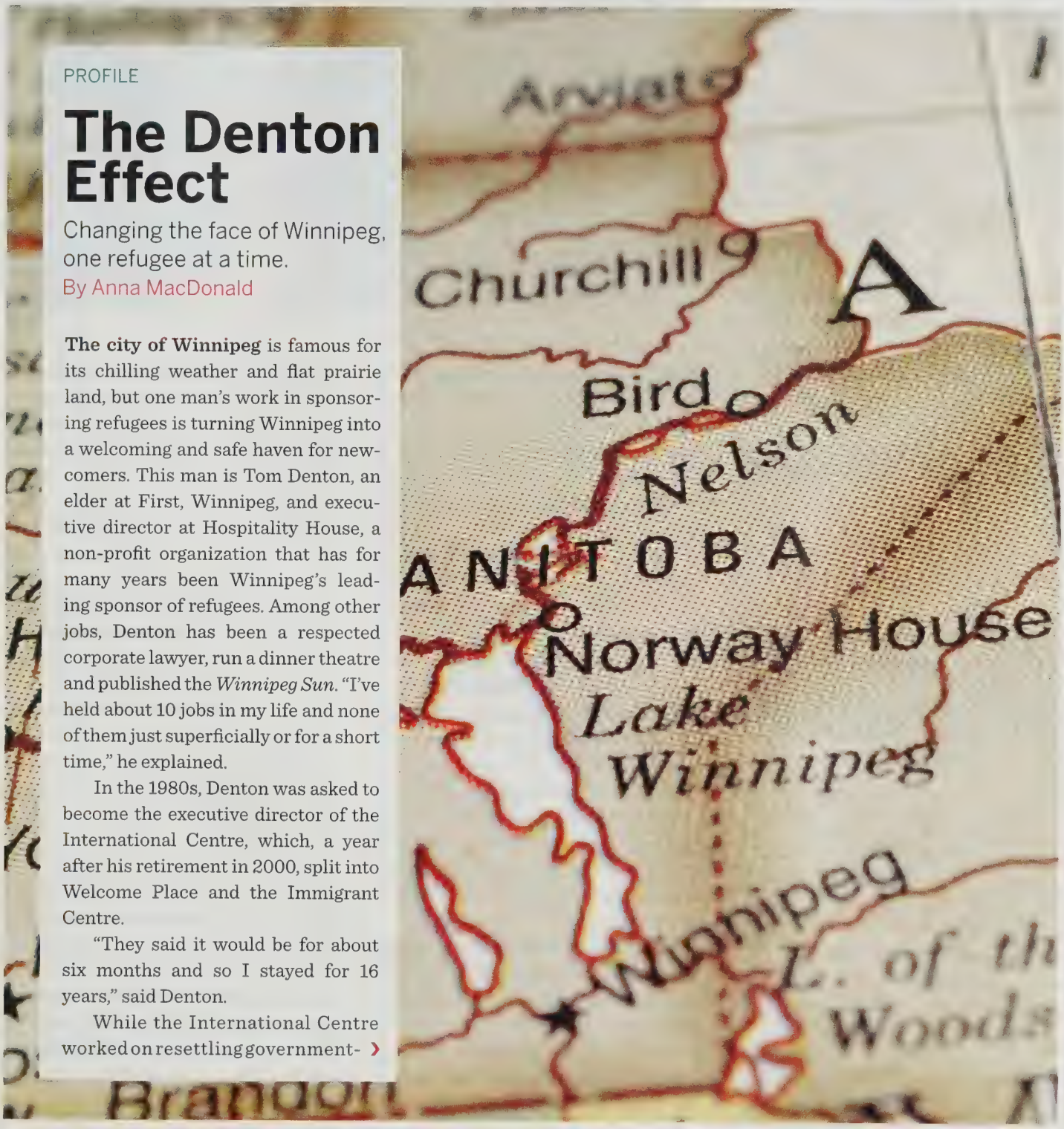
You have to let yourself be part of the mystery of the music. Take the first track, for example, "Metis-Sur-Mer," which is on the Gaspe Peninsula where Ingram has summered. You can hear the ocean and the river, the setting sun. That may have been where Ingram started, but it doesn't matter. You might hear in it your own cottage lake, your own summer.

I first heard the song as I left my driveway to pick up my daughter 200 kilometres away. The tune instantly put me on a path—it was a flowing river, and as it repeated after about 40 minutes I was on a different point in the journey. I heard the album three times that day. The music a constant commentary to the scene outside my car window—neighbourhood, city, highway, farmland, outlet malls, stalled traffic, the Shield rock. Aural meditations on life, love, death, friendship. It may have begun with Ingram but a mystery transformed it into something more personal to me.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *managing editor.*

Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community



PROFILE

The Denton Effect

Changing the face of Winnipeg, one refugee at a time.

By Anna MacDonald

The city of Winnipeg is famous for its chilling weather and flat prairie land, but one man's work in sponsoring refugees is turning Winnipeg into a welcoming and safe haven for newcomers. This man is Tom Denton, an elder at First, Winnipeg, and executive director at Hospitality House, a non-profit organization that has for many years been Winnipeg's leading sponsor of refugees. Among other jobs, Denton has been a respected corporate lawyer, run a dinner theatre and published the *Winnipeg Sun*. "I've held about 10 jobs in my life and none of them just superficially or for a short time," he explained.

In the 1980s, Denton was asked to become the executive director of the International Centre, which, a year after his retirement in 2000, split into Welcome Place and the Immigrant Centre.

"They said it would be for about six months and so I stayed for 16 years," said Denton.

While the International Centre worked on resettling government- ›

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PROFILE, continued

sponsored refugees from around the world, Denton "soon began to realize that the clients coming into the International Centre who were government-sponsored had left family behind."

"What were we to do? It was clearly a need and so I thought well, the Presbyterian Church in Canada has a sponsorship agreement, so maybe I could get First Presbyterian to start sponsoring refugees under that agreement, so we did." Because of his passion and initiative, his congregation has opened its doors to welcome many refugees over the years.

"First Presbyterian Church did [sponsor refugees]. I think I counted once something between 400 or 500 cases privately sponsored this way, this family-linked stuff," Denton explained.

Later, Denton played a key role in establishing an agreement with the International Centre and the Canadian government, which gave the International Centre the ability to sponsor refugees. That agreement was later inherited by Welcome Place, which makes them one of the biggest sponsors of refugees in Canada today.

When asked what inspires his work, he replied, "It's my faith more than anything, doing all that I can and God's work.

"I think Canada's self-interest requires a larger immigration pool than we are currently permitting because of the aging population and the declining birth rate," said Denton.

Cuts to healthcare funding for refugees and limits on age and the total number of immigrants allowed to settle in Canada, give the Canadian immigration policy an undercurrent of mean-spiritedness.

"The people are vulnerable and they need help. I mean it's as simple as that, and it's an obvious need and it's staring us in the face," he said.

"The sponsoring cases where I have personally signed the sponsoring papers would by now encompass something in the order of 8,000-plus refugees, I would guess, but I feel good about the fact that, in total, the seeds I planted have produced well over 20,000 sponsorships."

"Tom has done tremendous work on both the practical and promotional levels for the cause of settlement of refugees in Winnipeg and Canada, and in making this an integral part of the life of our congregation at First Presbyterian Church," said Rev. Kevin MacDonald, minister at First. "This is just one expression of optimistic spirit and passionate faith."

When June Denton was asked about her husband's work, she replied: "He's changing the face of Winnipeg. He really is."

Anna MacDonald is a member at First, Winnipeg, and daughter of the minister. She is 18 years old and has a particular interest in global human rights issues. To find out more about refugee sponsorship with the Presbyterian Church and Presbyterian World Service and Development, visit presbyterian.ca/pwsd/refugee-sponsorship.

PHOTO BY ANNA MACDONALD

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LETTER FROM NICARAGUA

A Delicate Balance

Raising kids abroad.

By Denise van Wissen

The first time a stranger called me "*madre*" (mother), I thought I'd heard it wrong; I was still learning Spanish. In my early 20s, striking out on my own, with kids still a distant dream, my first reaction was to take it as an insult.

But it didn't take long to learn that mothers are revered here in Nicaragua. It's as if you're not really a woman until you've had children. Mother's Day is a half-day holiday and most workplaces have celebrations to honour the mothers on staff. At SOYNICA, where I work with an all-female staff, the women with no children serve the mothers cake and present each of them with a flower.

This custom feels out of place because we've always worked to empower women, and even now that I'm on the receiving end, I feel uncomfortable with the reverence paid to mothers. Father's Day dulls in comparison, which is surely no coincidence in this macho culture.

If there's something I've learned in the last five years (I had my first son in 2008 and my second two years later), it's that living in a country of the Global South is one thing, but having kids in the South is a whole different ball game! After 16 years living in Central America, I was pretty sure I'd seen it all and done it all ... until motherhood began. I learned more about local beliefs and ideas—ideas that seemed crazy to me—like people with the ability to give a newborn baby the "evil eye." Even my Catholic-turned-Pentecostal mother-in-law bought our firstborn a red suit "to protect him" from the devil or evil spirits, and she put a little rolled-up red thread on his forehead to make his hiccups go away. I drew the line at a traditional "deer-eye" seed bracelet my brother-in-law wanted to give the baby.

Then there are the practical logistics, like figuring out what to do with baby Jeremy when I went back to work. In a culture where grandmas are readily available to look after babies, daycares haven't really caught on. When my boys were born in Guatemala, their nearest grandma was hundreds of kilometres away in Nicaragua; the other one was 10 times that distance, up in Canada. Thankfully, we found a wonderful young woman to look after baby Jeremy, and although she used the traditional Mayan Quiché dress, she opted to use my commercial baby carrier instead of the length of woven fabric most Mayan women still use—though with baby wraps being so trendy in North America right now, maybe she'll stick with the traditional method once she has her own children.

At 20 months, we sent Jeremy to preschool for the mornings, and while flabbergasted that we had to provide them, I rather enjoyed buying him the school supplies they requested. Homework before he was even toilet trained seemed a stretch though!

It took me years of living in Nicaragua to even begin to come to terms with the extreme poverty gap (and I doubt I'll ever be able to accept it), and explaining it to a child is a new challenge.

Our boys see both sides of this gap manifested daily, from the beggars, including children, to the wagon used for garbage collection in the muddy, poor settlements, contrasted with the truck in wealthier, paved neighbourhoods.

I'm glad for situations that provoke reflection, but Jeremy's questions out of the blue tend to take me by surprise. While I'm tempted to use them as teaching moments, I need to tread carefully between provoking pity for the poor or envy of the rich.

PHOTO BY DENISE VAN WISSEN

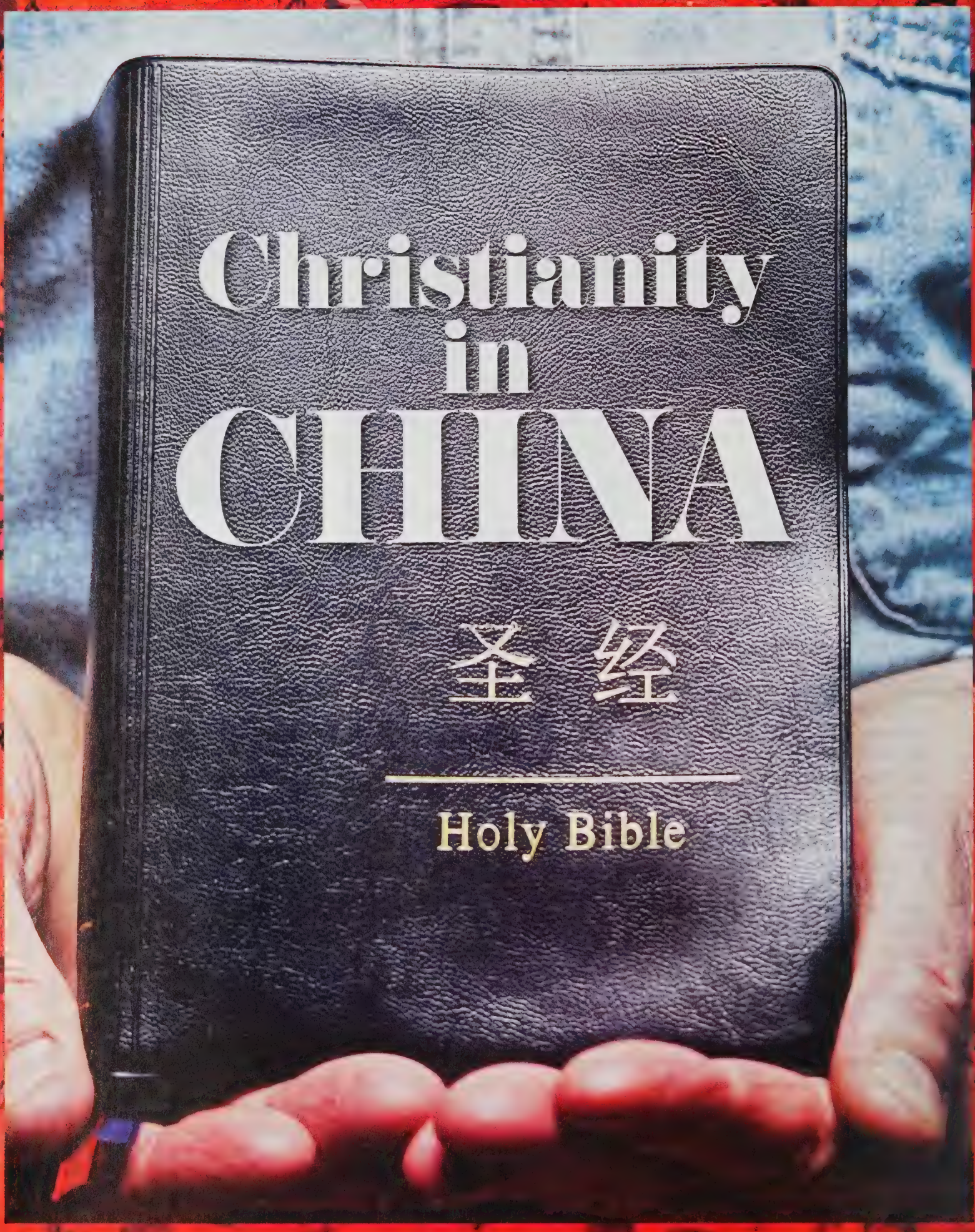
Trying to pass a horse and cart on the road one day provoked Jeremy's question, "Those people have a horse because they don't have a car, right, Mummy?" He said it so matter-of-factly that I was hesitant to try to answer truthfully—starting with the fact that they would probably prefer to have a car.

There's a long road ahead of trying to set a good example for our boys in this society of haves and have-nots. At least for my husband, Nelson, as with most Nicaraguans, charity comes naturally; they don't have all the western baggage that comes with philanthropy.

I hope that our actions and reflections, and the songs we sing at Batahola church like, "*Vos sos el Dios de los Pobres*" ("You are the God of the Poor") will help Jeremy and Dieguito to develop humility, compassion, and aspiration to serve and make a difference in their country.

Denise van Wissen is a missionary in Managua, Nicaragua working as nutrition advisor with SOYNICA, a PCC partner organization.

Christianity in CHINA



A Reclaimed Heritage By David Whyte

A friend of mine is a professor at a large university in eastern China. A communist party member, he had regularly attended a Bible class in Fredericton, where we studied the Gospel of John together, along with several other visiting professors and students from mainland China. When he returned to China, after completing a PhD in electrical engineering (his second doctorate), he decided to check out a local church. I later received an email: "I was surprised to see so many churchgoers. The main room, which can hold more than 800 people, was full and I only got a standing spot in the overflow area. During the service, 98 people were baptized." My friend concluded, "Jesus has gained a huge number of followers in China."

Such evidence is anecdotal but certainly not isolated. A journalist with the BBC in Beijing recently observed, "On Easter morning, in downtown Beijing, I watched five services, each packed with over 1,500 worshippers. Sunday school was spilling onto the street." By some accounts, there are more people at church on a Sunday in China than in the whole of Europe. Descriptors used in the western media include "explosive growth," and "a spiritual awakening."

This certainly stands in sharp contrast to the conditions of a few decades ago. In 1949, Chairman Mao Zedong condemned the West's religious and philanthropic activities in China as "spiritual aggression," and subsequently imposed severe restrictions on religious freedom. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1977) churches were closed and religion was outlawed. In a comprehensive 2011 study *A New History of Christianity in China*, Dr. Daniel H. Bays, emeritus professor of history at Michigan's Calvin College, describes Mao's actions as nothing short of a "nationwide eradication policy for Christianity."

A DIVINE CONSPIRACY

Mao's restrictions have since been eased, and churches were allowed to re-open in the 1980s but some elements of the Chinese leadership apparently still view Christianity as a sort of Trojan Horse for western values. Arguably, the Chinese leadership these days is about as communist as American Republicans, so perhaps that horse has already left the barn.

Conspiracy theories pre-suppose orchestration by a determined, single-minded, omnipotent entity. This doesn't sound much like the political West, but it does remind me of the God I worship, so any conspiracy associated with Christian faith in China is most likely a divine one. In fact, it's a conspiracy centuries in the making. The first known Christian missionary to China is thought to have arrived from Persia around 640. Xian (famous for its Terracotta Warriors), is also home to the Beilin Museum which contains, among other things, a nondescript block of limestone bearing an inscription dating from the year 781. The words carved in Chinese and Syriac script tell of a supreme, triune creator who "veiling His true dignity, appeared in the world as a man." It goes on to describe how this "Holy One" was born to a virgin and "set in motion the vessel of mercy by which to ascend to the bright mansion" by introducing life and destroying death.

The faith, service and suffering of Christian missionaries to China, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, over subsequent centuries bore much fruit and as a result the recent, pre-communist history of China is rife with the influence of native-born Chinese Christians in the areas of politics, education, medicine and social reform. Their lives and influence are recounted in histories such as Carol Lee Hamrin's *Salt and Light: Lives of Faith That Shaped Modern China*, and Ryan Dunch's *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of Modern China*.

My favourite concerns Lin Yutang, the noted early 20th-century philosopher and apologist for traditional Chinese spirituality and culture. Renowned for his 1935 bestseller *My Country and My People*, Lin was the son of a Presbyterian pastor. Better yet, after initially denouncing his father's faith as a betrayal of Chinese traditions, he later found his own faith after a life of study and reflection. In his own words: "I have dwelt in the mansion of Confucian humanism, and climbed the peaks of Mount Tao and beheld its glories, and have had glimpses of the dissolving mist of Buddhism hanging over a terrifying void, and only after ›

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"On Easter morning, in downtown Beijing, I watched five services, each packed with over 1,500 worshippers. Sunday school was spilling onto the street"

doing so have I ascended the Jungfrau of Christian belief and reached the world of sunlight above the clouds."

REKINDLED FLAMES

Despite enthusiastic media reports, Chinese Christians are not all having an easy ride. Atheism is still de rigueur in the Chinese communist party and some Christians are still persecuted and even arrested. It's a hard system for an outsider to understand. While the Chinese government allows and even encourages registered churches, it also forcibly closes those that have not been officially sanctioned. It's religious freedom within tightly controlled limits. The state does not welcome underground churches or proselytizing foreigners.

Ironically, it was the crackdown on religious freedoms imposed under Mao's regime that is at least partially responsible for the current resurgence, creating the system of unofficial "house churches" that, government restrictions notwithstanding, are such an important expression of Chinese worship today. As Dr. Bays describes it, "Talented and charismatic leaders emerged among the believers" during the dark years of persecution. He estimates that in Protestant congregations (all of which were house churches during the Cultural Revolution) the number of believers actually increased "by a factor of five or six" between 1966 and 1978, the time that religion was officially banned. Persecution as fertilizer for growth is a familiar theme in Christ's church throughout the centuries.

Rather than a spiritual awakening, perhaps what's happening in China today can best be described as a spiritual re-awakening. As secular materialism replaces both communism and traditional cultural values, more and more disillusioned Chinese are looking for deeper truth. As a result, it appears that Mainland China may now be in the process of reclaiming its own indigenous Christian faith, which has sometimes smouldered and sometimes burned brightly over the previous generations.

SUPERFICIAL OBSERVATIONS, DEEP IMPRESSIONS

Last year I took a trip to China. It seemed like the right thing to do after receiving so many invitations from former members of the Bible class who had since returned home. I speak no Mandarin or Cantonese, and travelled alone, so this was a step of faith as well as a vacation of sorts. Over a two-week period I stopped in six cities and visited with 16 former Bible class members, their spouses and relatives. As a result, I was able to collect a few superficial observations based on my scant few days in a massive, complex and rapidly evolving nation. I also experienced God's blessing, provision and encouragement. Travelling too fast and light to carry a laptop, I jotted down a few highlights in a notebook as I went.

Treading carefully, and all too ready to "hide my light under a bushel" to protect the privacy of my Chinese friends, I was surprised and happy to be frequently invited (actually required) to pray out loud before meals; both in private homes and crowded restaurants.

I saw a sign in a public park that boldly proclaimed in English: "Prohibition of cross." Aha! I thought ... religious suppression! I soon found out that this was no anti-Christian message, but simply a fractured translation of "Keep off the grass."

In one city I was invited to give a talk to a group of university students about Canadian culture. At the conclusion I was energized by the first question: "Do you believe in God?" And electrified by the second: "How would you convince me to believe in God?" And so in the mere blink of an eye, I crossed the line from pseudo-academic lecturer to proselytizing foreigner. Always stand ready to give a reason for the hope within you.

Anxious to confirm that the Wuchang on my train ticket would actually get me to Wuhan, I randomly chose a man at the railway station and explained my anxiety. His English was excellent and he seemed delighted to use it. This ultimately led to a visit with him and his fiancée in another city. Within the first few minutes of our evening meeting on a university campus, they asked, "Can you please

Chinese worshippers receive the Eucharist from Father Zhao Liang during Christmas Eve mass at a Catholic church in Beijing in 2010. Church services in China—both Catholic and Protestant—often draw more than 1,000 worshippers.

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tell us about God?" We spoke late into the night and I left them my Bible.

A former Bible class member, now the director of a research centre at a major university in central China, took time out of his busy schedule to personally accompany me to my next destination—an eight-hour round trip on his part. As we sailed along on a comfortable bullet train at 350 kilometres per hour in a pair of first class seats that he had paid for, he told me about the peace he used to feel while sitting in church in Canada. He also told me that he now reads the Bible to his son every evening.

I visited Sun Yat-sen's impressive tomb in Nanjing. This socialist revolutionary and first president of the post-imperial Republic of China was author of the Three Principles of the People (nationalism, democracy and livelihood). These were later adopted by Mao (who apparently had a different interpretation of the meaning of democracy). As I watched the constant stream of reverential visitors climb the 392 steps to Sun's marble sarcophagus, I wondered how many knew about the Christian faith that shaped his reforms.

Normally a great worrier, I learned to trust God a little more. While I didn't enjoy it when my luggage was taken apart due to the heightened security ahead of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it happened only once. Sweating in an under-ventilated computer lab while struggling to receive my blocked email, using a computer that only understood Chinese, I was given a cup of cool water by a smiling student. It eased my frustrations and reminded me that I was being well looked after. While dealing with a persistent cold throughout the trip, I was given the strength to get up each day and negotiate a disorienting series of airport terminals, train stations, buses and crowded city streets when normally I would just lie in bed. Friends in four cities bought medicine for me and I seldom had to carry my own luggage. My Chinese friends were extremely generous. In fact, it was only when I arrived back in Canada that I realized that not once had I paid for a single meal, taxi, train ticket or hotel room. My fat, sweaty money belt was never opened.

My heart is full for my friends in China. They are warm-hearted, intelligent and blessed materially by most standards, but many are early in their careers and are under great pressure to meet the expectations of employers and families. Competition is severe in the workplace. Supervisors are demanding. Materialism is rampant. Hours are long and the pace is exhausting. They live in cities that are crowded and restless, with skies often opaque with smog. A large gap between rich and poor (who live side by side in the cities) and militaristic diatribes against Japan (evidenced by television images of flags, tanks, missiles, jet fighters and navy ships) were the other tensions I noticed. My friends told me, "it's hard to feel God in China." I'm not sure what to do with all this except to keep praying and proclaiming as each of us is commanded to do.

I was able to meet up with my friend with the two doctorates and go with him to the church he had mentioned in his email. As we approached the building, we saw a crowd of people, young and old, sitting comfortably on the green grass, listening to the service over a loudspeaker system. We couldn't even get into the packed building.

David Whyte is a preacher's kid who lives and works in Fredericton.

A Malawian

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in Canada

Reflections on church.

By Joshua Nyangulu

Dear beloved daughter Fannie,

It is summer here in Toronto in June and everyone looks delighted to see the sun. Everyone keeps telling me that I am lucky to have come during this time of the year because it can be terribly cold during their winter. Imagine it is usually below zero degrees here, while in Malawi the coldest day would be six. People tell me that six degrees is not cold but cool.

From what I have experienced during my stay in Canada, and Toronto in particular, I would like to share with you some of my observations.

Canada is by all standards one of the most developed and economically stable countries in the world. Due to this it is very difficult for someone like me who comes from one of the least developed countries to draw a clear line to demarcate the poor, middle class and the rich. It seems that the citizens have all one may need within their reach, and some have them in excess; hence, materialism and individualism have taken centre stage. From my observation, since these people have everything, they do not feel the relevance of worshipping God, let alone going to church.

I had the privilege of patronizing a baseball game. Baseball involves two teams of nine players each who take turns batting ›

and base running. It is difficult to follow, especially if you are just being introduced to the game. Let me mention that stadiums here are quite huge and by all standards comparatively far ahead of ours, but baseball proved to be a popular game as the stadium was fully packed. I was really amazed to see the number of people patronizing the game, something which made me occasionally switch off from the game and concentrate on the multitudes.

To my left, my right, in front of me, at my back, on the upper front decks, side decks, the list goes on, it was people—people and people all over. Each of these sides accommodates thousands of spectators. I understand the stadium has the capacity to accommodate more than 52,000 people. Can you believe this, Fannie? This means that this stadium is able to swallow the whole population of Ekwendeni, which is around 45,000.

What was so surprising is that though we were in the stadium for more than six hours, and the evening was getting colder, nobody seemed to care. [*Editor's note:* Nyangulu just happened to go on June 6th, the longest game in Blue Jays' history, with 18 innings.] The scoreboard was tagged at three each, and upon enquiry I learned that the final whistle would not blow before one team comes out a winner. Unlike in a soccer match where we usually spend 90 minutes or a little more in some cases, this took us the time we could take to watch six soccer matches before the game wound up. But the good news was that "our" team became victorious. It was good that we won as the loss would have spoiled the fun on a day well started.

My ignorance of the rules of the game did not really affect me, as apart from watching the game, there were so many eye catching happenings in the stadium like dancing, feet stamping and shouting by a crowd of excited supporters. However, I made sure that I struck a balance between my diverted attention and the response to the happenings in the pitch.

I discovered that people felt at home in the stadium, and it was not difficult to tell that they were where they belong. Though they were not players themselves, but mere spectators, I noticed that they were not left out, but fully participated throughout the game. Their intimacy with the game openly indicated that there is something that naturally and emotionally binds them to it.

The stadium experience drove me into a fierce battle within my mind; I kept thinking about the Sunday worship services I have attended at different churches here in Canada. The common sight was a good number of empty pews waiting in vain for someone to warm them up, while here I was in the stadium where it was a totally different scenario; thousands and thousands of people gathered together just for a baseball game. Unlike in the churches where most of the members are elderly men and women, the baseball game attracts members of all ages.

Some parents even took their small children to the game, and believably these children will keep patronizing the game when they grow up, hence being assured of its future.

This reminds me of what Rev. Sowah Ablorh, minister of a growing Ghananian Church in Montreal, said during an encounter at the General Assembly when I asked him if there is anything that should be done if the church is to reclaim its lost patronage. He shouldered the blame on the parents in what he termed "indigenous churches" for not making enough efforts to bring their children to church; something he thinks will seriously affect the future of the church in Canada.

He claimed that his church will keep growing because the parents encourage their children to go to church with them. I think Ablorh has a point by looking at the children and young people as the future church and the parents as having a bigger part to play; hence the need for parents and grandparents to start the ball rolling with education on the importance of going to church. There is a need to engage a strong gear, of course accompanied by serious prayer. Moreover, the word of God assures us that with God nothing is impossible, and indeed everything is possible.

This, I feel, should not just be water under the bridge, but rather the point of departure with a view to reverse the present situation in the churches in Canada. Probably, this may be a stepping stone for the church here and beyond to further explore strategies in order to

Can you believe that I met a lady who has not been to church for close to 15 years, yet she does not find it to be a problem?

make people feel at home during times of worship.

Rev. Bob Faris, associate minister of St. Andrew's in downtown Toronto, believes that by taking the church to the community, the situation will likely reverse. His church fulfils this by engaging the communities through breakfast and lunch for the homeless and jobless. During a visit to St. Andrew's, I discovered that the church is open for everyone to do their meditations, regardless of their religious affiliations.

Although it is believed that what worked somewhere may not work everywhere, my mind boomeranged to the youth program that my church in Malawi embarked on; it's known as "evangelism through sports" and is one of the ways of getting the young people into the church. This is a program aimed at attracting the youth to the church by introducing different sporting activities. Most of the youth in Malawi have a passion for soccer, hence so many teams have emerged and are used as a tool of bringing and maintaining young people in the church.

The author and his eldest daughter, Fannie, at home in Malawi.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOSHUA NYANGULU

The church in Canada may borrow a leaf from their counterparts in Malawi by incorporating things like baseball and other games that may attract people to churches.

Rev. Tom Vais, a minister at Thornhill, is in total agreement with this line of thought. During a visit to his church he noted that the church should be proactive and know the needs of the neighbourhood.

Dorothy Murray, an adherent of Knox Church in Port Carling, feels it is time the church should reach out to the people's needs by being active in the communities by inviting the people for a talk. This would probably work; unfortunately, the church seems to be so traditional and not as engaging in order to take care of the needs of young people.

Fannie, most people here do not put going to church on a priority list as we do in Malawi; they do not mind about the church anymore, and even those who go always seem to be mindful about time, yet they can spend the whole afternoon watching games or movies. When I engaged the former moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Rev. Dr. John Vissers on this issue, he was of the view that it is time for what he termed "church without walls." He pointed out that this is not the time to build a church building and expect people to come in. What the learned man of God cited is very true in the Canadian context, while in Malawi it would be vice-versa.

The author in his Malawi office.

Can you believe that I met a lady who has not been to church for close to 15 years, yet she does not find it to be a problem? From our talk it was clear that she does not see anything missing in her life. She does not believe in the Trinity and that Jesus Christ is God, but she believes about the existence of a supreme being. She even goes on to claim that there are many people of her calibre, and even some who have never been exposed to any religion. This lady quizzed me about why we have so many churches and yet claim to have one Christ. She accuses us of being hypocrites. Do you think we really are?

My presence at the 139th General Assembly provided the opportunity to engage ministers and commissioners from across the church, and through these interactions I may claim to have added a reasonable amount of knowledge about the church and life in this part of the world. Maybe this is the reason why my forefathers used to say that wisdom and knowledge are not only acquired through sitting within the four walls of a classroom, but also through travelling.

Just like the way we have changed from meeting within weekdays for the synod's biennial assembly, the church here also for the first time tried conducting the General Assembly from Friday through the weekend to Monday.

I was surprised to see the moderator standing and conducting the whole assembly business, unlike in our Synod Assembly where the moderator sits and the general secretary introduces items on the agenda. I feel the moderator here does not get the honour he deserves as the church's spiritual father.

I am afraid I am failing to compare Seneca College, where the General Assembly met, with any of our universities. It is quite a beautiful institution with good facilities. I wish we had similar tertiary educational institutions in Malawi. If we had such big university campuses in Malawi, all those students who qualify for university education but just end up loitering in the streets because of insufficient tertiary education institutions would have been graduates today. Unfortunately, due to frustrations, some have ended their studies, indulging in criminal activities.

It would be doing myself injustice if I skip the Niagara Falls experience. The *Presbyterian Record* organized a trip to the famous falls, an experience that I will live with the rest of my life. Many people go to the falls either to have fun or on educational trips, but I did not see a church trip to the falls. Maybe in the future the church will start identifying things that people like the most and will take advantage by organizing such trips as a way of evangelizing the lost souls. After visiting the falls we had our lunch at a revolving restaurant on top of a tower, which I learned is 750 feet from the ground.

To God be the glory.

For today I pen off,

Dad

Rev. Joshua Nyangulu was the Record's *intern this spring. He is the literature secretary for the Synod of Livingstonia, the northern synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian. He is a minister and a journalist. He is married with three children, of whom Fannie is the eldest, and lives in Ekwendeni, Malawi.*

PHOTO BY ANDREW FAIZ

FROM THE MODERATOR

It's About Honesty

Facing the truth in love. By David Sutherland

I have already felt the power of your prayers in my ministry as moderator. At the Truth and Reconciliation gathering in Vancouver, which I'm scheduled to attend Sept. 16 to 22, I will have represented you. I will have heard stories of suffering.

It is my prayer that I will be able to exchange some of the pain and anger for peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control when I listen to the truth that hurts.

"[S]peaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:15). Speaking the truth in love is presented as a priority of spiritual maturity. Sometimes facing the truth can hurt even when it is surrounded by love.

I go to encounter the truth from another perspective. I know that many servants of Christ offered love and kindness and truth in our residential schools. I know there were many remarkable hours of self-giving by many who taught and served. I also know that there are stories of pain and suffering.

John tells us that Jesus described the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth, who abides both with us and in us (John 14:17). The Spirit would help us hear the truth about and from Jesus (John 15:26). The Spirit would guide us into

all the truth (John 16:13). "All truth" includes the truth that liberates, the truth that enlightens and the truth that comforts. "All truth" also includes the truth that hurts. A quest for the truth involves opening ourselves to the Spirit. An encounter with the truth, any truth, is a visit with the Spirit.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). By the fifth chapter of the fifth book of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit takes on a difficult role. Our Advocate, Friend and Guide into the presence of God here and now, becomes the one who also tests our integrity and convicts us in our lies. Sometimes the truth will hurt.

To be honest, the truth hasn't always been easy for me. My imagination, my friends will tell you, is large and often exaggerates my memories. My busy mind causes me to hear what I want to hear. To speak the truth in love involves a decision to be accurate and to colour the truth not with our imaginations but with joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

To walk in the company of the Holy Spirit involves not only speaking the truth in love but also listening to the truth in love. I know that listening is more than an exercise of my mind just as hearing is more than the work of my ears and brain. Those same fruits of the spirit that should surround our telling should also season our listening.

As a Christian I have learned that listening to the truth is not designed as a solo journey. Our grasp of the truth is enhanced by perspectives of others. We experience this in the fellowship of Bible study groups. We celebrate scholarship and the wisdom that comes from the front lines of Christian witness.

I go, on your behalf, to hear the truth in the spirit of love. I pray that all will find new joy and liberty in Christ's healing love. That same joy and liberty belong in any congregation where the followers of Christ are gathered.

Rev. Dr. David Sutherland is minister at St. Andrew's, St. John's.

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Food For Thought

Charities and hand-me-down churches. By Bradley Childs

ARTICLE

Back in March, I read a fantastic little article in the *Huffington Post* entitled: What if the Kids Don't Want Our Church? In short, it's a look at how people in the previous generation collected and cared for things like fine china and hoped one day to pass these things down to their children. Today, however, these same people are discovering that this latest generation has no attachment to things like that. What the previous generation thought they were handing down for generations to enjoy will most likely be sold in a garage sale, if they are lucky enough to find an owner at all. The article begs the question, is the kind of church we've built just another unwanted knick-knack, and if so, what should we do?

FIND IT @ **huffingtonpost.com/derek-penwell/what-if-the-kids-dont-want-our-church_b_2902781.html**

CHARITY

Operation Smile is an organization that aids children with a cleft lip and/or cleft pallet (which affects one in every 700 children born today). The company works primarily in the two-thirds world. Since its inception, the organization has performed over 200,000 free surgeries and worked with three million more. It is a wonderful organization that makes a huge difference in saving the lives of infants, many of whom could die of malnutrition without the proper care.

FIND IT @ **operationsmile.org.**

VIDEO

TED Talks are a worldwide group of conferences and speeches organized by the non-profit group, Sapling Foundation. The goal is to share knowledge. There are all kinds of interesting speakers like biotechnology engineer and physicist Robert Fischell, who speaks about his new implantable defibrillator, and Sugata Mitra who's Hole in the Wall experiment with children and computers inspired the film *Slumdog Millionaire*. But my favourite so far is Dan Pallotta's, "The way we think about charity is dead wrong." Basically, he says that everything we think about non-profit organizations, advertising and "overhead" is undermining programs that we love, stopping them from flourishing and pushing the most talented leaders away from them and out into the private sector instead.

FIND IT @ **YouTube. Search for "Dan Pallotta."**

PROPHET

Pat Robertson, the televangelist and chairman of the Christian Broadcasting Network, has always been a little divisive. He is a multi-millionaire author, past presidential candidate and marijuana legalization advocate. He said 9/11 was the ACLU's fault; Hurricane Katrina came as God's punishment on abortionists and that Haiti got hit with an earthquake because its government had a pact with the Devil. He even claimed the end of the world would come in 1982. Recently he was trying to sell his own brand of protein health bars and promised his audience that he could leg press 2,000 pounds (700 pounds more than the world record). So ... he's not exactly right all the time. But *this* time, during the 2012 presidential election, the Lord told him what was going to happen.

FIND IT @ **YouTube. Search for "Pat Robertson on Mitt Romney."**

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

PILGRIMAGE

Standing in Shadows

A walk through Edinburgh.

By Connie Wardle

The tomb of James Graham, Marquess of Montrose

From July 6 to 22, 2012, Connie Wardle participated in a pilgrimage through countries touched by the Protestant Reformation. This is the ninth of a series of reflections on the journey.

As I walked through the echoing sanctuary of St. Giles Kirk in Edinburgh, Scotland, I tried to imagine the riot.

It was on July 23, 1637. The service had scarcely begun. The dean stepped into the pulpit and began to read from a brand new prayer book.

King Charles I had requested the new liturgy. It was part of an effort to impose an episcopal system—with its bishops and hierarchies—on the Scottish church. It was very unpopular.

The poor dean had barely begun reading the collects when, according to tradition, a woman named Jenny Geddes hurled her stool at his head. A riot ensued.

Did the dean hide behind the pulpit? Did he pop up now and then to try to keep reading? Did he give up and make a run for the doors?

As I rounded one side of the sanctuary and peered through a pair of wrought iron gates, my joviality drained away. There stood a reminder of the violence that gripped the country in the years that followed.

There are two elaborate tombs in St. Giles. Both men were Covenanters—those who signed the National Covenant in 1638 and advocated for Presbyterian governance—but in life they fought on opposite sides in a civil war.

James Graham, the Marquess of Montrose, came to fight with the Royalists who supported the king. Archibald Campbell, Marquess of Argyll, fought against him on the side of the Covenanters.

Two enemies, both of them Presbyterian, are now encompassed by the walls of the same church. They lie across the sanctuary from each other, their graven images sleeping with swords on their chests.

The decades that followed the riot in St. Giles are punctuated with bloodshed: the Bishops Wars, the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, the persecution of Covenanters and armed rebellions against government forces.

When King Charles II was restored to the throne and an episcopal system was again imposed on the church, some ministers began to preach in the countryside. These illegal meetings were called "conventicles" and preaching at one was punishable by death.

In Edinburgh, we passed a number of places where Covenanters were executed during what is often called the "Killing Time." A portion of the churchyard of Greyfriars Tolbooth and Highland Kirk was used as an open-air prison. In the Grassmarket area, a monument marks where the hangman's scaffold stood.

Attending an illegal prayer meeting seems like such a small thing. Did people think it would it make that much of a difference? Was it really worth the risk?

Yet rulers feared the conventicles. In their way, the gatherings were powerful.

Walking in the shadows of those memorials made me realize how rarely I think about meeting with fellow believers. As I haul myself out of bed on a Sunday morning, I don't think of going to church as a powerful thing. I don't think about those Christians, past and present, who risk their lives each time they meet together. Although I stand in the shadow of a cross every Sunday, how often have I thought about the cost of faith?

Connie Wardle is the Record's *staff writer.*

FAIRVIEW, VANCOUVER, B.C.
After a Sunday service in July, friends and family gathered around Rev. Dr. Tony and Margaret Plomp to celebrate the minister's 50th anniversary of ordination. Shown here are Emma Gold, Marijke Wester, Oliver Gold, Tony and Margaret Plomp, Corinne Wester and Debbie Plomp.

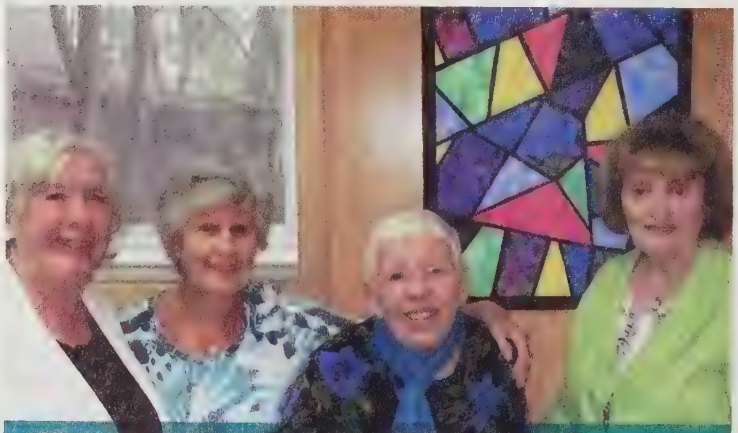
WESTMINSTER, PAISLEY, ONT.
On the occasion of their accompanist's retirement, choir members present Helen Cumming with a special gift, honouring her 35 years of service as church organist. Pictured here are Rev. Shelly Butterfield-Kocis, Ruth Ziegler, Bessie Robertson, Gladys Teeple, Elsie Parsons, Helen Cumming and Barbara Fullerton.

People & Places

Find more online at presbyterianrecord.ca

Starting January, People and Places will be an online feature only. Photographs can be uploaded at presbyterianrecord.ca.

TRINITY, TORONTO
More than 200 people joined together for a service and luncheon to celebrate the congregation's 60th anniversary last May. Gathered around the cake are guest preacher Rev. Dr. Herb Gale, Trinity's pastor Rev. Ferne Reeve, founding member Betty Chambers, longtime member Bill Alexander and Rev. Dr. Jim Czegledi.



ST. ANDREW'S-CHALMERS, UXBRIDGE, ONT.
Four librarians from two churches celebrate a recently renewed church library. Jeanne Alexander and Irene Dimanis of St. John's, Port Perry, presented a handcrafted wall-hanging (pictured in the background) to their colleagues Marjory Ueckert (far left) and Riet Orde (far right).

CROMARTY, STAFFA, ONT.
The Marion Ritchie WMS of Cromarty celebrated their 100th anniversary last May. Gathered around the cake are the society's current members: Betty Lou Norris, Eleanor Richman, Claudette Elliott, Peggy Kerslake, Joyce Miller, Lillian Sparling, and Alice Gardiner; (absent is Ruth Kunzie).

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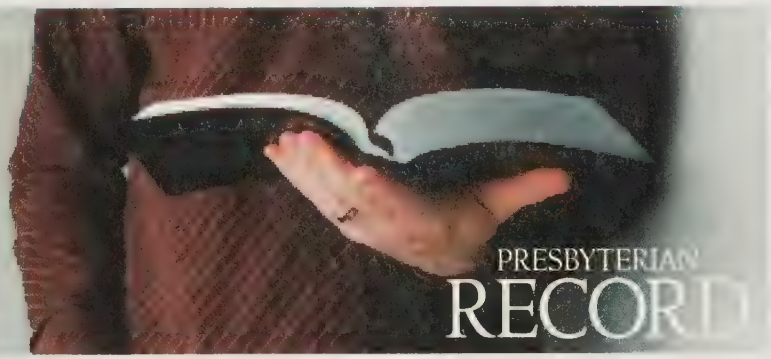

Ministry Opportunities

Synod of the Atlantic Provinces

- Harvey, Knox and Acton, N.B., Interim Moderator Rev. Douglas Blaikie,512 Charlotte St., Fredericton, NB E3C 1E1; 506-455-8220; minister@sapc.ca
- Saint John, N.B., Saint Columba: Half-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Wendy MacWilliams, 28 Somerset Dr., Hanwell, NB E3C 1M8; 506-206-5031; wendymacwilliams@rogers. com.
- Tabusintac, N.B., St. John's, New [illegible]ion and Bartibog, St Matthew's; Full-time minister for three-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Derek Krunys, 206 Wellington St., Miramichi, NB E1N 1M7; dkrunys@hotmail.com.
- Truro, N.S., St. James and St. Paul's Full-time minister for two-point charge;InterimModeratorRev.Michael Koslowski,2-75AltavistaLane,Halifax, NS B3N 0A1; 902-402-6747; michaelkoslowski@eastlink.ca.

Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario

- Arnprior, Ont., St. Andrew's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Seung Kim, 24 Ethel St., Petawawa, ON K8H 2C1; 613-687-2463; seung37@hotmail.com.

Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda

- Elmira, Gale; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Karla Wubbenhorst, c/o Westminster-St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, 206 Victoria Rd. N., Guelph, ON N1E 5H8; 519-763-9215; kwubbenhorst@yahoo.ca.
- Kitchener, Doon; Interim Moderator Rev. Kees Vandermey; 519-698-0300; rmvandermey@gmail.com.
- Markham, Markham Chinese: Full-time associate minister for English-speaking ministry; Interim Moderator Rev. Sam Priestley, 19 Elm Lea St., Markham, ON L3P 3M8; 905-294-1633; sam.priestley@bell.net.
- Mount Forest, St. Andrew's and Conn, Knox; Interim Moderator Rev. Andrew Apack Song, 51 Church St., Elora, ON N0B 1S0; 519-846-0680 (church) or 519-846-8028 (home); andrewapack@gmail.com.
- Oshawa, Knox; Interim Moderator Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith, c/o Burns Presbyterian Church, 765 Myrtle Rd. W., Ashburn, ON L0B 1A0; 905-925-6346; jeremy@burnschurch.org.
- Scarborough, Fallingbrook; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. J. P. Ian Morrison, 17 Earswick Dr., Scarborough, ON M1E 1C7; 416-460-5214; Ian.morrison@sympatico.ca.
- Toronto, St. Andrew's Humber Heights; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Sean Howard, 3819 Bloor St. W., Toronto, ON M9B 1K7; 416-233-9800 x202; sean@standrewsislington.org.
- Whitby, St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Alexander Wilson, 17 Colonial Ave., Scarborough, ON M2M 2C3; 416-431-0841 (church) or 647-501-0632 (cell); st.stephens.scarborough@gmail.com.

Synod of Southwestern Ontario

- Bayfield, Knox; Part-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. John Henderson, PO Box 824, Exeter, ON N0M 1S6; 519-235-2608; henderson.johncharles@gmail.com.
- Burlington, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Robert Docherty, c/o Knox Presbyterian Church, 461 Elizabeth St., Burlington, ON L7R 4B1; 905-333-3013; revbob.docherty@gmail.com.
- Fingal, Knox; Part-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Kevin Steeper; 519-438-3492; ksteeper@elmwoodchurch.ca.
- Lucknow and South Kinloss; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Mark Davidson; 519-924-1537; m.mark.davidson@hotmail.com.
- Meaford, Knox; Part-time minister (75%); Interim Moderator Rev. Peggy Kipfer; 519-599-6645; peggykipfer@gmail.com.
- Stoney Creek, Heritage Green; Part-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Charmain Sebestyen; csebestyen@shaw.ca.

Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

- Brandon, Man., St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Dong-Ha

Kim, 35 Aurora Cres., Brandon, MB R7B 4G4; 204-727-5874; donghafpc@mymts.net.

- Thunder Bay, Ont., First; Minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bert Vancook, First Presbyterian Church, 639 Grey St., Thunder Bay, ON P7E 2E4; 807-623-0717; first@tbaytel.net.

Synod of Saskatchewan

No vacancies at this time.

Synod of Alberta and the Northwest

- Calgary, Alta., St. Andrew's; Minister, Vision and Direction; Presbytery Representative Rev. Grant Gunnink, 7655 26 Avenue SW, Calgary, AB, T3H 3X2; 403-249-6006; revg@valleyviewpc.org
- Edmonton, Mill Woods; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Jean Bryden; 59-10453 20 Ave. NW, Edmonton, AB T6J 5H1; 780-756-6320; jebryden@gmail.com.

Synod of British Columbia

- Comox Valley, Comox Valley; Interim Moderator Rev. John Green, 579 Grayson Rd., Campbell River, BC V9W 6K3; revjohngreen@gmail.com.
- Cranbrook, Knox; Senior pastor; Co-Interim Moderator Rev. Doug Johns, 117 Norton Ave., Kimberley, BC V1A 1X8; 250-432-9531; revdjohns@hotmail.com.
- Vancouver, Burnaby Taiwanese; Minister; Jason Cheng, Chair of the Search Committee, 778-228-8998 (cell); hellojason.tw@yahoo.com.tw

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obituaries

Innes, Rev. Kenneth Alexander, December 18, 1942-February 7, 2013. Ken grew up on the family dairy farm in Oxford County, Ont. He attended elementary school at S.S. No. 7 and high school at Stratford Central Secondary School. During his time at Waterloo Lutheran University, Ken felt called to enter ministry. He answered God's call by attending Knox College in Toronto, graduating in 1969 and being ordained into the Presbyterian Church in his home church, Knox Presbyterian Church, Harrington, Ont. Ken began his ministry at the four-point charge of Wanham, Belloy, Brownvale and Dixonville, Alta., in 1969. During this time he met his wife, Carole and they were married in 1973. After realignment, Ken served at Wanham and Blueberry Mountain until 1975. From Alberta, Ken and Carole moved to Brussels/Belgrave, Ont., where they remained until 1983 when, along with their two young sons, they made their final move to Winnipeg to answer the call to St. John's Presbyterian Church. Ken remained in this position until his retirement in 2004.

Ken is survived by his loving wife of 40 years, Carole, son Troy and his wife Stephanie along with their daughters Inara and Kalie, son Ryan, sisters Donna Jean Innes and Maxine (Don) Holbrough, brothers Edward and Grant (Anne) Innes, and many nieces and nephews along with their children. Ken was predeceased by his father Burns in 1989 and his mother Florence in 2000.

Ken's love of life led him to enjoy a variety of pastimes including curling, plowing, traveling, gardening, model railroading, collecting toy tractors, playing the bagpipes, baseball, hockey, golf and many other activities. Ken believed in a broad definition of "family" that included his friends, neighbours and church congregation.

Above all else, Ken lived his life to glorify God. A celebration of Ken's life was held on Monday, February 11, 2013 at St. John's Presbyterian Church, Winnipeg.

Nicholas, Esther Isobell, After a lifetime of service to her church and community, Esther entered peacefully into God's hands at the Brantford General Hospital on Sunday, February 3, 2013 in her 92nd year.

Esther volunteered for more than 50 years with St. John's Ambulance, being appointed "Dame of Grace by the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem." She was an active long-time member of Knox/Mt. Pleasant Presbyterian Church and also an elder since 1986.

FOR THE JOURNEY

A Day in the Life

Jesus has authority over all. By David Webber

There is nothing in my life as it has been, as it is, or as it will be that is not under the authority of Jesus

This October day started off early with a visit from the river otters. They arrived at about 7 a.m. and settled in just off our dock. They were whistling and playing; dipping and diving like juvenile delinquents out for a good time at everyone else's expense. There were five of them, a couple of adults and three kits, I think. They dilly-dallied for a bit, almost like they were going to stay the whole day, and then for reasons known only to them, they swam off whistling, dipping and diving towards the other side of the lake. I poured myself a coffee and held it in both hands as I watched them go.

I was on my second cup of coffee when the trumpeter swans came in, a dozen huge white birds blowing their horns like a '56 Buick. They proceeded to dance Swan Lake on the stage just off our beach, complete with tip ups and majestic neck curves. When they were finished their performance and were well fed from the weeds in the shallows, they all tucked their heads under their wings and drifted front first into the wind for a good sleep. They looked like dumplings on a stew.

That's when a long-tailed weasel showed up, red-brown with a black tip on his tail, racing across the dandelion patch that passes for our lawn. He dived under our dock like a commando and stuck up his head very cautiously to peek out at the huge swans. His head was flitting and darting from side to side, shifty eyes all over the swans. I haven't a clue what the little imp had in mind with the huge trumpeters but they didn't pay him any mind. Weasels are ferocious hunters but the trumpeters outweighed him 10 to one and they have been known to take out a full-grown labrador retriever in the water.

That was the morning. I left for work and returned later in the afternoon. Linda had been putting up trout so I took the heads and tails down to the lake to see if there was anyone interested in sharing in our repast. I laid out the fish on the dock and headed back up to the house. It didn't take long. Soon a lone adult bald eagle showed up from the island across the lake. It landed on the dock and proceeded to cautiously dine. Then, from out of nowhere, company showed up. First there was one other adult eagle and then an immature eagle. They began a performance of goofy antics competing for the fish. Two would swoop and dive-bomb the one on the dock with the fish, then they would all trade places and the combat aerobatics would go on again. Over and over the routine was repeated. Two crows stood just about a metre and a half away and I think, in the end, they got most of the fish.

Not to be outdone, Gronk the Blue Heron showed up after the eagles and crows had left. He stood on one leg and spear-fished for minnows in the shallows. Silhouetted in the sunset, the heron was a beautiful ending to a wonderful day. ›

Such is a specimen day, one day in late October at the Webber's cottage on Lac La Hache; a busy day filled with so much wildlife activity. Not all of our days are like this. In fact, very few days are this jam-packed with wildlife. But for me, this specimen day in some way captures the very essence of what it means to live here. That's why I call it a specimen day, an extraordinary sample day that speaks its essence into the everyday. Somehow it sort of says it all in terms of what this blessed place is about.

The Gospel of Mark has such a day in the life of Jesus. In Mark's specimen day, Mark 1:21-34, Jesus begins his ministry in Capernaum on the Sabbath in the synagogue. He is there teaching. His teaching was of a kind that evidenced great authority and amazed everyone. In the midst of this, a man confronts Jesus. He has an unclean spirit. The spirit recognizes the authority of Jesus, the authority even to destroy it. The unclean spirit also recognizes the source of this authority, that Jesus is "the Holy One of God." Jesus demonstrates his authority as the Holy One of God by silencing the spirit and casting it out of the man. The crowd in the synagogue then recognizes that their teacher, the one who "taught with authority," indeed has the authority to command even the unclean spirits. This news about Jesus spreads through Galilee that very morning. Coming out of the synagogue, Jesus, together with James and John, proceeds to Andrew and Simon's house where Simon's mother-in-law is sick with a fever. They speak to Jesus about her. He takes her by the hand, raising her up healed from the fever and she proceeds to serve them. This demonstration of Jesus' authority over illness attracts a crowd. As the sun goes down and the Sabbath is over, the whole city is gathered with all the sick and demon possessed. Jesus heals many of those who are ill and casts out many demons whom he will not allow to speak because they know who he is and they know his authority.

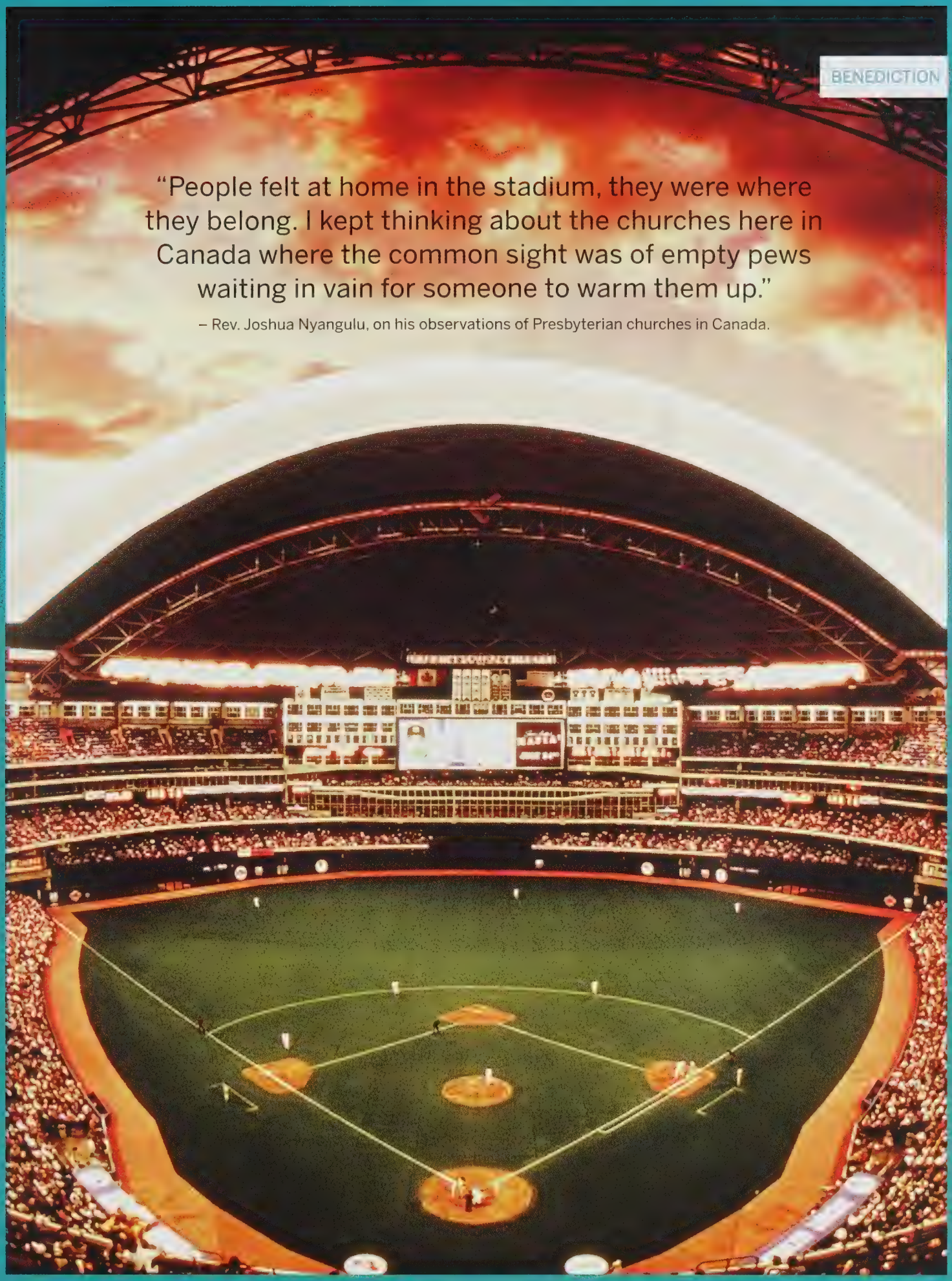
That's quite a day, a specimen day. And like all specimen days, those extraordinary special days that capture the very essence of things, for Mark and his telling of the story of Jesus, this specimen day says it all. Jesus is the Holy One of God with all authority over all things. Jesus is Lord of all. In a very real sense, the rest of the Gospel of Mark right up to and including the resurrection is an illustration of this one powerful truth.

When I think about Mark's specimen day and what it says about the very essence of Jesus, I am brought to my knees with amazement for what it says to the everyday of my life with him. Jesus is Lord of all. Jesus has authority over all. There is nothing in my life as it has been, as it is or as it will be that is not under the authority of Jesus. I can face it all with the confidence that every single ordinary day is under the authority of the Holy One of God. And I can fall backwards with my life into the arms of the one who rules from a cross, who holds my life in his nail-scarred hands and has the authority of the one raised from the grave so that even death has no power to defeat me.

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of several books.

"People felt at home in the stadium, they were where they belong. I kept thinking about the churches here in Canada where the common sight was of empty pews waiting in vain for someone to warm them up."

– Rev. Joshua Nyangulu, on his observations of Presbyterian churches in Canada.



GETTY IMAGES

2013 CHRISTMAS COVER ART CONTEST

We'll choose one winning entry to run on our front cover and many others will be featured throughout the entire magazine. This contest is open to all ages and all styles of art.

Send a high resolution scan of your Christmas-themed art to **cwardle@presbyterian.ca** or send it on an 8 ½" x 11" sheet to:
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Please be sure to include your name, age and your church's information on the back of each entry or in your email.

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NOVEMBER 2013

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LIFE

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Everyday Samaritans

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"For the government of Quebec, the crucifix [that hangs in the Quebec National Assembly] has been evacuated of its religious meaning. The crucifix has been appropriated and relocated within a vigorously secular state—a state within which religious language (the language of sacredness and of belief) is curiously redeployed by the state to defend the expulsion of religion from the public sphere and from sight. And there the crucifix hangs—appropriated and meaningless, disconnected from the faith of those who have, for some 2,000 years, honoured and followed this crucified Jew."

—Roland De Vries, Encrusted Words,
presbyterianrecord.ca

There's a whole other magazine online

PRESBYTERIAN
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PRESBYTERIAN RECORD

NOVEMBER 2013

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Everyday Samaritans

We can all be heroes—in church and in life.

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FOR THE RECORD

Francis's Big Heart

Pope provokes us all about our faith. By David Harris

Pope Francis may turn out to be the most important pope since Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli entered the world scene in 1958 as Pope John XXIII.

Like John, Francis seems to have a generous heart and an equally generous theology. John's most famous saying was: "We were all made in God's image, and thus, we are all Godly alike."

Francis has said: *The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ: all of us, not just Catholics. Everyone! 'Father, the atheists?' Even the atheists. Everyone!*

But what has really put the wind up conservatives in the church—as well as putting wind in the sails of liberals—is a 12,000-word interview with the Jesuit magazine *America* titled A Big Heart Open to God. (See americamagazine.org for the complete text.)

It strikes me as not entirely coincidental that this interview came out just days before the Oct. 11 anniversary of the first session of Vatican II in 1962. But that is beside the point. What surprised not only Roman Catholics but the whole world were his comments that the church needs to pay less attention to rules and morals and focus more on pastoral and social justice issues.

"We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods," said the pope. "This is not possible ... it is not necessary to talk about these issues all the time."

It is not that Francis disagrees with his church's teaching on these subjects, but he clearly wants to shift the emphasis away from them as the top priorities for Catholics.

This may signal one of the most profound shifts in Christianity in more than 100 years, and is certainly the most profound shift in the Roman Catholic Church since John XXIII threw open the doors to ecumenism and launched Vatican II, whose reforms conservatives have since been working assiduously to close.

The impact of Francis's comments will be felt widely across Christendom, because he identified what one writer in the *National Catholic Reporter*, Michael Sean Winters, called "[t]he fetish for moral clarity on certain moral issues [that] has led to many unfortunate results."

As Winters goes on to say: "the fixation on 'intrinsic evil' and its role in determining the Church's stance in the public square has led to a deflated concern to focus on grave, but not intrinsic evils, like poverty."

These twin fetishes, moral clarity and intrinsic evil, infected many Christian denominations and turned Christianity in the West into something of a laughing stock at best and despised at worst for being morally hypocritical, intellectually bereft and utterly irrelevant.

And, as has happened in other denominations, hard-liners who trumpeted church authority to back up their obsessions are now challenging their ultimate authority, suggesting he doesn't think clearly.

Perhaps it's just the opposite; that he, in fact, thinks very clearly. And in so doing, is provoking people to think very clearly about their own faith.

We should all do that.

David Harris is the Record's *publisher and editor.*

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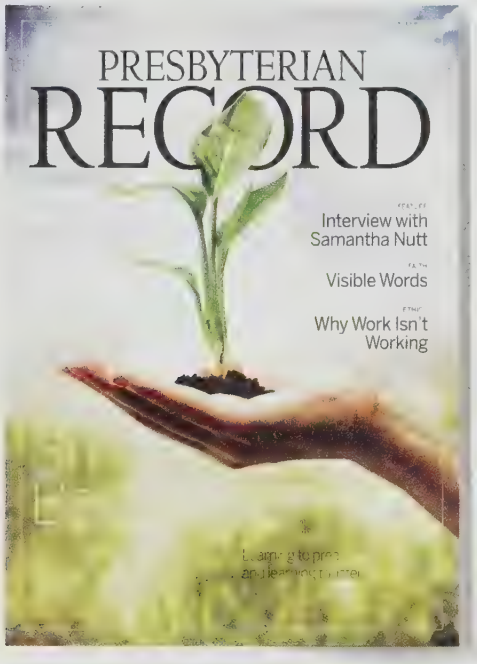


Preach, With the Right Facts

Re A Mausoleum to Christendom, September

There are many articles in the *Record* which I appreciate, but few where I am inclined to jump out of my seat, throw my hand into the air, and shout, "Preach it, brother!" This was one of them.

We seem to have our head in the sand. I came into the Presbyterian Church 26 years ago and we are talking about the same things at General Assembly today that we were back then. Nothing has changed. We talk about being prophetic, but our voice is most often little more than a spiritualized repeat of voices in the world. We certainly do not know how to speak prophetically to ourselves, and those who try are either outright ignored or find themselves in a position similar to that of Micaiah who, when challenged by Ahab to tell the truth, was promptly thrown into jail when he did so.

RON VANAUKEN, WHITBY, ONT.

Just read your story on Westminster Abbey. Mary Queen of Scots' son was James I of England/James VI of Scotland. Charles I was her grandson.

CAROL DOBSON, HALIFAX

The Invisible Majority

Re Why Work Isn't Working, September

Thank you for publishing Kevin McCabe's excellent article describing exactly the impacts of downsizing and the toxic office politics it often gives rise to.

Contrary to what many people assume, it is not easy for a man in late middle age to find a new, career-track, full-time job within a month or two of being downsized. Too many people assume that the man who has lost a job must be living on EI or welfare, or, according to some mainstream publications, is a lazy Baby Boomer living off the system and relying on younger generations to pay into CPP and Medicare on his behalf. He is thought to be doing nothing with his time, moping around in his home all day. Efforts at self-employment are dismissed, not taken seriously or are referred to mockingly.

There seems to be a tendency to blame the person downsized—that ›

he was somehow responsible for not being able to hold down a job. There is a lack of awareness that downsizing and "restructuring" and multiple layoffs have been going on for at least 25 years in corporate North America, and most often the individual affected is not responsible for the decision, which is frequently made at distant corporate offices.

PAUL STRICKLAND, VIA EMAIL

This article reminded me of the many times I have heard sermons on Jesus' parable of the talents, five, two and one. The only character held accountable, and severely so, is the miserable guy who was entrusted with only one talent.

There is the strong inference that it is all right for people to be rich enough to go off on a holiday or business trip leaving managers at home, hoping they will give a good return on the investment. This very much resembles today's world of the rich—investors, large-scale developers, bankers—in a word, the corporation, which cannot do other than seek huge profits. The corporate mind reasons that it has only one responsibility: the shareholder.

Kevin McCabe is right on with his analysis of how it has come about that so many persons have been cast into states of poverty by outsourcing and by what he calls the "cost-benefit analysis" of unregulated business practices. What church dares to "point out the pitfalls of unregulated businesses?"

Back to the answer I got two years ago: these are the invisible majority. Let them fend for themselves. Do two jobs if one is not enough. What more do you want? You have a full-time job, part-time. Sorry, no benefits.

Does this person need any other perdition?

PETER PENNER, CALGARY

Context and Relevance

Re Reformation Pilgrimage series

I wanted to say how much I have enjoyed reading Connie Wardle's articles on the 2012 pilgrimage, following the steps of Calvin and Knox through France, Switzerland and Scotland, in the *Record* over this past year. I was on that pilgrimage and what a pleasure it has been to relive that wonderful experience through Connie's unique perspective. It has been so interesting to read Connie's beautifully written pieces in which she has picked up on incidents and details one had forgotten but then related these to both historical context and relevance for our world today. Many thanks to Connie and to the *Record* for this series of articles.

BRENT ELLIS, HAMILTON, ONT.

Many Blessings

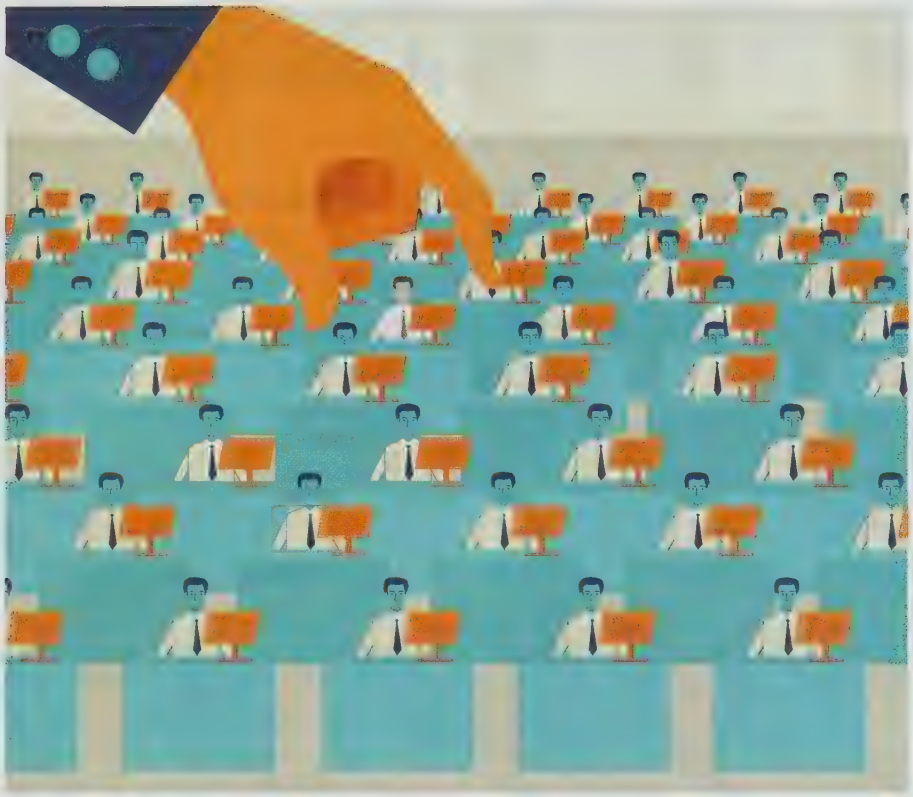
Re Cookies from Clergy, Letters, September

I once received a plate of cookies from my elder's wife. Davina was helping her husband with pre-communion visits.

And would you believe while Rev. Elizabeth Kidnew was my minister she took me out to lunch once a year? Just to be fair, I took her a few times.

I have received recipes from ministers' spouses. I should also mention two jars of homemade jam.

The most outstanding thing I received was a knock on the front door of my daughter's house every day while I was there for a week in Orangeville, Ont., by Rev. Harvey Self. He



Why Work Isn't Working, September

was checking to see how I was doing after having the new baby grandchild rushed to Sick Kids hospital in Toronto. My son-in-law was at Sick Kids and my daughter was still in hospital. A day later she was home, then soon went to Toronto as well. Harvey arranged for a day visit to Sick Kids for us both, with church member Julia driving. With wonderful doctors, nurses and prayers from many church members, Thomas Morrison is now eight years old, in Grade 3 and doing great.

I have had blessings, support and even cookies.

SUSAN GRIMWOOD, FONTHILL, ONT.

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November Food Drive
We Need Your Help

The 42nd Annual Ecumenical Food Drive is quickly approaching. It is hard to believe another year has passed and again we have seen our storage shelves depleted. Due to rising food costs, and an increase in the number of people who visit us, we are finding it more difficult to keep our shelves stocked with perishable food items and canned goods.

Through the hard work of the fantastic volunteers and participating churches, our shelves will again be restocked with food to feed the many hungry people who come through our doors.

Every fall the food drive depends on many volunteers to help distribute flyers and collect food. The canned food collection also requires volunteers to assist with flyer delivery on Saturday, November 23rd from 9:30 to Noon and for the food collection on Saturday, November 30th, again from 9:30 to Noon.

Your support makes a difference. If you are interested in volunteering or organizing your own organizational food drive to help Evangel Hall Mission, **please contact Paula @ 416-504-3563x 231.**

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Personal Conversations

Worship is often a very private experience. By Andrew Faiz

While worship has a ritual and a tone, both of which are always under discussion, there is a hidden element we rarely talk about. There is a whole other worship, a personal thing, sometimes completely unattached to the liturgy, often flowing independently of the hymns, prayers and sermon. This other worship for all of us in the pews, each individually, each in their own way, each with different concerns and weights, is a private matter, our personal conversation with God.

Every now and then a line from a hymn, or a prayer or the scripture reading or the sermon intersects with my personal conversation with God. At other times, such a line or a moment from within worship opens up inside of me a wave of calm or peace, and sometimes of anxiety or guilt or worry. Worship in the end is a very private thing, at least for me, and a complete mystery. I've walked out of worship sometimes feeling agitated and sometimes energized. Neither is a negative or positive state, it is a moment in my faith journey, part of my dialogue with God.

And I know, I suspect, I hope, that the same is happening to the person sitting beside me, to the others in the church with me. But we rarely talk about this; it is a private matter. So profoundly private that it sometimes arouses in us doubts which we dare not share.

Worship in the end is a very private thing, at least for me, and a complete mystery. I've walked out of worship sometimes feeling agitated and sometimes energized

"Worship, I feel, is where we need to come very personally to God, in that space and time, and be open to what He is speaking, and try to understand it and see where you fit into God's kingdom," says Allen Stuart, elder at Morningside High Park (where I attend). I interviewed him earlier this year—along with Brian McClure, another elder at the same church—about his faith journey.

Stuart, like McClure, comes from a Bible-reading, church-going family. Stuart grew up Plymouth Brethren, got involved in Presbyterian youth groups, worked at InterVarsity. He describes himself as a small-d denominationalist. And while he struggles in his life (as we all do, with work and other stresses), he is open to talking about many issues, including doubt, that arise from a life of faith. As packed as life may be with contradictions, he has never stopped talking to God.

You can see my interviews with Stuart and McClure online (at presbyterianrecord.ca). McClure aims for a ceaseless conversation with God, despite his own concerns and doubts. He constantly seeks to bring his faith into everything he does; a very conscious attempt to not only talk the talk but also walk the walk.

Both these men try to bring that mystery of worship into their lives. By their own admissions, or perhaps because of their own sincere desires, they don't always succeed. They worry about that; as I think we all do in our own way—that we fall short of the ideal state. And for that we engage in a most profound experience called worship, which is both communal and intensely private.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *managing editor.*

BULLETIN

Community and world news

PHOTO BY COLLEEN WOOD

A New Hostel in Jobat

WMS members celebrate the fruits of their fundraising.

By Colleen Wood

It began in 2008 with 12 women and a trip to India. As part of an exposure tour with the Women's Missionary Society, the group visited programs and partner organizations in central India, including the school in Jobat. ›

continued...

Children who lived too far to travel home each evening would stay in the school hostel. Yet the women were concerned about the building's poor condition.

They returned home with a dream of building a new hostel, and launched the Together We Can campaign. Under the direction of the national WMS, individuals, groups and congregations raised more than $160,000 for the project.

More than five years after the original group of 12 visited Jobat, another 12 women helped inaugurate the new hostel on Sept. 20.

WMS delegates joined Bishop Robert Ali of the Bhopal Diocese, Church of North India, in cutting a series of ribbons, unveiling a plaque, and visiting the space for the first time.

The WMS is now raising funds for work with aboriginal peoples in Canada and maternal health programs in Malawi and Afghanistan.

Colleen Wood is editor of Glad Tidings, *the WMS' official magazine.*

KAIROS STAFF RESIGN

A voluntary exit program at PCC-supported Kairos means three people have resigned. Read the full story at presbyterianrecord.ca

INCLUSIVE CHAPLAINCY

By Andrew Faiz

All young people, away from home for the first time at university or college, struggle with their own sense of identity. For some of them that struggle includes issues of gender or sexual identity. For many that struggle plays out in isolation. Rev. Karen Bach, founder of the Ecumenical Chaplaincy at the University of Toronto, encountered several students suffering this way when she was the campus chaplain.

"I remember one young woman, referred to me when she was discovered on her third floor window ledge contemplating suicide rather than accepting herself as a lesbian. It took her over a year to finally tell me why she had been out on the ledge. Tragically, she was convinced that her father would kill her if he found out about her sexual orientation."

On another occasion she asked a young man to "articulate a word that would describe him ... 'Self-loathing ...'" was his response.

When the Ecumenical Chaplaincy was formed in 1990 there was little or no openness about sexual identity and conversations were often held in private. Today, the chaplaincy has an outreach program to talk to and work with young people struggling with their sexual orientation within a faith environment. Qu(e)erying Religion, a ministry program for lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender and queer students was first launched in 2005 "to create a safe space to explore the interconnectedness of spiritual, religious, theological and queer realities in personal and theoretical perspectives." The chaplaincy is housed at Knox College and at Emmanuel College (United Church), Toronto.

A fundraiser was held at St. Andrew's, Toronto, in support of QR in mid-September. More than 100 guests helped to raise several thousand dollars. Speaking in support of the program, Bach wrote, "That you are now providing a venue for them to gather together, to discuss experiences and theologies is exactly what has been needed on the campus for some time."

Downtown Toronto MP Olivia Chow speaks at the ECUT benefit at St. Andrew's, Toronto.

PHOTO BY ANDREW FAIZ

'With Courage and With Honesty'

Honesty "can be painful," Rev. Dr. David Sutherland, moderator of the 139th General Assembly, said to those gathered at the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission event in Vancouver.

"It can also be liberating and a step in a journey toward wholeness. ... At this national event, as at other national events of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we are listening to painful stories from survivors [of residential schools], told with courage and with honesty."

He spoke to the gathering on Sept. 20, with Rev. Mary Fontaine, executive director of Hummingbird Ministries in Richmond, B.C., standing beside him.

In his remarks, he acknowledged those teachers who "did their very best to care for children for whom they were responsible." But, he continued, "we know why residential schools were created and we know the evil that was done to so many children was systemic."

Together with the TRC commissioners, Sutherland and Fontaine placed *Silent Voices*, a CD created by Fontaine and 17 musicians, singers and storytellers, into the commission's bentwood box as a sign of reconciliation. —*CW*

Rev. Dr. David Sutherland and Rev. Mary Fontaine (centre) join commissioners as they place a CD in the TRC's bentwood box.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN KENDALL

YONGE STREET MISSION SELLS FLAGSHIP PROPERTY

By Connie Wardle

Yonge Street Mission took a bold step in October, announcing it has sold its namesake property at 381 Yonge Street, Toronto.

The building has been used by the mission since 1904 and is home to Evergreen, a centre for street youth.

The needs of the youth are shifting and "we're outgrowing the space," said Angela Draskovic, YSM's president and CEO. The Yonge Street property includes facilities to provide basic health care, employment services, meals, programs and a drop-in centre. But it lacks quiet spaces for one-on-one counselling, for example.

Over the years, YSM has received several unsolicited offers for the property, which is in a prime downtown location. The board struck a property committee to consider such offers.

"This is a historic decision for Yonge Street Mission and not one to be taken lightly and one to be done for the right reason," said Draskovic, who became CEO in June. "When this call came through ... it was my eighth day on the job. I looked up and said, 'God, you're laughing at me.'"

Although YSM cannot release the sale price or the name of the private real estate equity company that bought the property, Draskovic confirmed that an appraisal last year valued the property at $4 million and stressed that the sale price was "significantly more."

"It was a significant opportunity to increase our investment," she said.

The parties agreed on a closing date of September 2016. Over the next three years, YSM will determine what type of space would best meet the needs of the mission and the communities it serves, and how it might use the remaining funds from the sale to expand its operations.

YSM operates in six locations and provides services for various groups and communities in Toronto.

Much to Celebrate

Children of Celebration cut the ribbon for the new Celebration Centre.

They have moved three times this year: They moved their worship from a North York, Ont., banquet hall to a rented facility in a new Bible college; they moved their offices and community meeting places to a new storefront unit; and they moved from within the Presbytery of East Toronto to the Presbytery of Oak Ridges.

Celebration, constituted within the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1997, purchased a storefront unit last year in a strip mall in Markham for $600,000, with the help of a grant from Canadian Ministries of $450,000. Since renovated, the new Celebration Centre will be used for a variety of community events, including offices for the minister Rev. Alan Goh and meeting space for the three youth groups and the seven small groups. (Some of the groups will continue to meet in homes.)

The centre is not big enough (and there may be zoning restrictions) for the 100 or more who come regularly to worship, so Celebration will be renting from the People's Christian Academy, an independent Bible college also in Markham. With the offices and worship moved from within the boundaries of East Toronto, Celebration is now in Oak Ridges.

Celebration is comprised mostly of second- and third-generation Chinese. The congregation grew out of Toronto Chinese Presbyterian Church, with a small group that started meeting in 1996. There are about 120 members today.

The congregation would have preferred to purchase their own church building north of Toronto but did not feel they could afford to carry debt. Instead they wanted to continue their Bible and youth programs, and their commitment to the three missionary couples they support in Tanzania, Central Asia and China, plus their ongoing partnership with a First Nations community in Longlac, Ont.

"Mission is the lifeline of the church," Goh told the *Record*. "It is why Jesus died to win people to his side. We are continuing to work on that priority." *—AF*

REFUGEE AWARENESS EVENTS

The Presbyterian Church, led by Presbyterian World Service and Development, endorsed the Proud to Protect Refugees campaign earlier this year. To highlight this initiative and the plight of refugees around the world, three events are scheduled in the coming months:

- **Week of Action – Nov. 10-17:** Local events to reach various audiences.
- **Human Rights Day – Dec. 10:** A national, public statement with high-profile participants.
- **Solidarity Walk – June 16-22, 2014:** Walks will be happening across Canada.

Information on the Proud to Protect campaign, including a toolkit with resources for churches, is available online or contact PWS&D at 1-800-619-7301 or pwsd@presbyterian.ca. *—PWS&D*

CATECHISM ANNIVERSARY

The World Council of Reformed Churches has published a booklet on the *Heidelberg Catechism*, marking its 450th anniversary. The Catechism, produced in 1563, is a question-and-answer document used to teach Reformed Christian doctrine.

The booklet will help congregations celebrate the occasion and will include historical and theological background, an order of service, sermon notes, ideas for Bible study and more. For a copy of the booklet, email wcrc@wcrc.ch. *—WCRC*

PHOTO BY ANDREW FAIZ

Faith

Deepening your relationship with God

GETTY IMAGES

THEOLOGY 101

The Question is Coming

Family, divorce and same sex marriage.

By Blair Bertrand

Living Faith 8.2 and 8.3

We rarely stop and give thanks to John Calvin, one of the founding theologians in the Presbyterian tradition, for the gift of divorce. We should. After lying dormant for centuries, blanketed in Roman Catholic sacramental theology, Calvin reintroduced divorce into law. Long before divorce was legally available to most Canadians, Calvin brought it to 16th-century Geneva.

It may seem strange to celebrate this fact. *Living Faith* certainly doesn't. It takes a more negative view of divorce. "When a marriage is shattered beyond ›

repair, it is sometimes better that it be dissolved than that the family continue to live in bitterness" (8.2.5). The end of a marriage in divorce is painful and while at times necessary it is only justifiable to avoid even greater pain. No couple willingly and knowingly enters into marriage so that they can divorce; divorcees recognize both the necessity and the pain of the end of their marriage. We all recognize, along with *Living Faith*, the genuine suffering caused by divorce, and therefore celebrating Calvin's reintroduction of it seems odd, maybe even wrong.

Living Faith, in line with thousands of years of Christian tradition, captures at least three aspects of marriage. These three aspects, or more traditionally "goods," may compete with each other and we may have to make difficult choices to privilege one over the others at different times. Calvin privileged one aspect of marriage and by doing so attempted to alleviate economic hardship and relieve suffering.

The first "good" of marriage is children. While the New Testament has an ambivalent relationship to families, and *Living Faith* recognizes that "marriage is not God's will for everyone," (8.2.2) the Christian tradition affirms the important role that parents play in the lives of children. It is a good of marriage to be "the means of creating new life" (8.2.3) and for parents "to raise their children within the covenant community" (8.2.4). Second, marriage is for companionship, an emotional connection that provides "mutual joy and comfort" (8.2.3). However, *Living Faith* is silent on the third good of marriage. Traditionally, marriage has been for partners to help each other economically. Secular society recognizes this by enshrining it in the tax code where married couples file differently than single people. *Living Faith* does not recognize this good, which is a shame since it was the main reason Calvin reintroduced divorce.

Historically, a largely agrarian subsistence economy depended on large and strong families. It was an economic necessity to bind yourself to another, and given the patriarchy of the time, it was even more important for a woman to do so. In Calvin's time, to be officially married a couple needed to have sex and exchange vows but the order was not set. Unscrupulous men would woo women, sleep with them, deny it publically and disappear, leaving their "bride" to face the consequences of shame and possible pregnancy. Because a child made it obvious to all that the woman had sex and was therefore married, the woman bore the brunt of the economic deprivation. She neither had a husband around nor could she remarry because there was no way of ending her consummated marriage. Calvin recognized this conflict and re-introduced divorce to help women who had been duped into sex and were therefore economically marginalized. He took the command to look after the poor, the widows, and the children seriously and needed a legal way to let women remarry. Divorce was his solution.

Studies show that even today we do better economically as a couple, but *Living Faith's* silence on the matter mirrors our broader culture; few people today get married for economic reasons. People generally marry because they love another person, because they feel a deep emotional connection to them. Divorce denies the second good of marriage—companionship—in the deepest way.

I highlight divorce even though it is not the main thrust of *Living Faith's* understanding of family because it may point the way forward for the Presbyterian Church. Neither Calvin nor *Living Faith* with their different emphases are wrong about what marriage is. Both stand within a broader theological framework tied to our understanding of God and our lived experience of family. Both start on theological grounds but come to different practical conclusions.

Calvin's view may challenge our implicit theological understandings of what marriage or family are. Today we have lifted up one good of marriage over others, like Calvin lifted up economic justice, and this fact should force us to acknowledge that our practice and our theological understanding of family changes over time.

I am not making an argument for or against any particular position but we would be naïve not to note that *Living Faith* contends that marriage is between a "man and a woman" (8.2.3). At some point in our future together as the Presbyterian Church in Canada, we will once again discuss and debate that formulation. We will ask, "Should we change *Living Faith* to include same-sex couples?" The question of same-sex marriage is coming. Before it does we would do well as a denomination to establish what we really mean theologically when we say "family." The first question for us as the church is not about "same sex" but about what is "marriage."

I highlight divorce even though it is not the main thrust of Living Faith's understanding of family because it may point the way forward for the PCC

Rev. Blair Bertrand is minister at Calvin, Abbotsford, B.C.

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

Jesus Finds Us

Even just people need salvation. By Emily Bisset

24th Sunday after Pentecost (All Saints Sunday)
November 3, 2013
Luke 19:1-10

While Luke and Matthew both tell the story of the lost sheep, Luke's is the only gospel that includes the lost coin and the prodigal son. Lost and found is one of Luke's favourite themes. People can get lost in many different ways: taking a wrong turn or getting caught in a sticky situation like a sheep in the field, willfully going far away while seeking independence and ›

Repentance is not a prerequisite to being found and loved and valued and accepted by Jesus. Not even the prodigal son repents. Jesus finds us and loves us and accepts us. Period

fortune like the younger son, or getting lost in the shuffle at home like the woman's coin or the elder brother.

Another favourite theme in Luke is the acceptance of the outcast. It is linked because those who are lost are found. When you are found by Jesus, you are not just tolerated or accepted at arm's length until you conform to a certain standard or behaviour. When you are found by Jesus, you are completely loved and valued and accepted.

We meet Zacchaeus up in a sycamore tree peering out through the branches as Jesus and his disciples go by. His eagerness, short stature, and this funny image have endeared many to him. He is a Jew who has taken a job with the Roman Empire to collect taxes from his own people. Tax collectors are known for cheating, exhorting, betraying and stealing. Zacchaeus has access to wealth that many of his peers would never see. He is viewed as a sinner and no one will associate with him. Being a tax collector is lonely. One lives at the mercy of both temptation and stereotype.

On the one hand, we have often interpreted this as a classic story of repentance. Jesus stops and calls Zacchaeus down from his tree. The tax collector pledges to give half his possessions to the poor and repay fourfold those he has cheated. At such repentance, Jesus declares him both saved and found. This reading of the story affirms the crowd's assumptions about Zacchaeus, as well as the church's expectation of those who come to faith.

But there is another interpretation possible. Some biblical scholars argue that Zacchaeus' statement to Jesus is more accurately translated in the present tense. What if Zacchaeus said, "Half of my possessions I give to the poor and if I defraud anyone, I pay him four times as much?" Such a translation throws a wrench in our classic understanding of repentance that must precede forgiveness and causes us to consider whether we too have judged Zacchaeus according to a stereotype rather than the truth of his character.

Such a translation also strangely reinforces something that Luke has been saying all along: Repentance is not a prerequisite to being found and loved and valued and accepted by Jesus. Not even the prodigal son repents. Jesus finds us and loves us and accepts us. Period. If so, then the point of this story is not that Zacchaeus experiences a conversion and pledges an extravagant penitential plan. The twist may be that Zacchaeus is actually already a just, faithful person and even just, faithful people need salvation.

Rev. Dr. Emily Bisset is minister at Calvin, Toronto.

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RENEWAL

A Time For Opportunity

God has led us in the past and will lead us in the future. By Matt Brough

As a leader, you are in for a rocky road if your personal contentment is tied to how many people are in your church. You need to deal with this and it cannot be dealt with by simple resignation to the reality of your ministry. You must deal with it with hope, vision and much prayer. You also must deal with it in living out the fact that you are a beloved child of God.

When your church has stopped growing or is shrinking in numbers, panic among leaders and members tends to set in. But when the numbers are getting smaller, you have an opportunity. Your opportunity is to be honest and pray. Your opportunity is to turn to God and turn the ministry over to God. Your opportunity is to engage the whole church in praying for renewal, or in praying for where God might have you go for the most impact for the Kingdom. (Please don't read this as simply getting more people into church.)

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RENEWAL, continued

something like this: There are fewer people worshipping here now and we don't fully know why. Rather than guess, and rather than make excuses, we are going to see this time as an opportunity for us to turn to God and ask for renewal. God has led us in the past and God will continue to lead us into the future. It's not that we need more people here for the sake of having more people. No, we will pray that God will begin a new work in us as His people, because that is who we are. We will pray for God to show us where we can together make an impact for the Kingdom, regardless of if it results in more people for us. Because we aren't in it for us, we are in it for God and for the people God wants us to serve. When new people come, let's welcome them with open arms and invite them to pray along with us for God to lead, for God to show us the way. We may not have everything figured out, but let's give this church over to God no matter how many in number we are.

The tough part comes after this, because as you start praying you will have to face these questions:

1. Do you really trust God with the church and believe that God will do something with you?
2. If so, how long are you willing to wait on God to open up new possibilities?
3. Will you, as a church, be willing to do what God asks you to do?

Rev. Matt Brough is the founding pastor of Trinity, Winnipeg. You can read his blog, Small Church, Big Vision on presbyterianrecord.ca and follow him on Twitter @mbrough.

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MEDITATION

A Journey to Justice

Rediscovering what God requires of us. By Glen Davis

In the 1970s, while working in Japan, I received a call from Rev. Dr. In Ha Lee, who had been the main author of a new mission statement adopted by the Korean Christian Church in Japan. He asked if I would translate it from Korean into English so it could be shared with ecumenical partners. I accepted the task with some trepidation. As I worked on this thought-provoking, visionary statement my theology suffered a jolt.

You see, I had been brought up in the somewhat conservative atmosphere of Presbyterian churches on Cape Breton Island, N.S. My professors at Presbyterian College, Montreal, were not entirely successful in prying me loose from some of my tightly held conservative convictions, although they did help me to take a more faithful and critical approach to biblical interpretation. When I became a missionary in Japan, I was still firmly committed to the evangelistic task of the church and did not have much time for that secondary task called social justice.

But that mindset could not survive long in the midst of the discrimination and denial of human rights which Koreans in Japan were subjected to in every facet of their lives.

One night I went to a house gathering of our youth group and found everyone in grief and sorrow. One of our church youth who had defied all odds by gaining entrance to, and graduating from, a prestigious Japanese university, had taken his life. As a Korean, although born in Japan, he had no ›

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MEDITATION, continued

right of citizenship and was denied employment in any job for which his university degree qualified him. He ended up driving a dump truck. But he could not endure the endless, daily discrimination, so he hung himself. The young people looked at me and asked, "*Moksanim* (pastor), what good is the gospel if all it offers is life after death and does nothing to help us with this life, here and now?" I had no answer for them.

Shortly after, I found myself translating the KCCJ's mission statement. It proclaimed a thoroughly biblical declaration of the need both for evangelism and for social justice as equal sides of one coin. It challenged me to take seriously those countless cries for justice that permeate both the Old and New Testaments, cries that I had either ignored or simply interpreted spiritually rather than physically and practically. That was a liberating experience because it opened my eyes to the breadth and fullness of the gospel. It also told me that I could no longer claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ without doing all I could to end the poverty, oppression, violence, racism and discrimination that are such a gaping wound in this world that God loves so much.

What I did not realize until later was that I became a better Presbyterian (or Reformed Christian) that day! I began tc undertake my journey to justice more intentionally, and was delighted to discover that I had some wonderful companions along the road. John Calvin, for example. "For Calvin, justice is a condition of society; a society is just to the degree that people enjoy what God has for them, what is due them as the objects of God's affection demonstrated in Jesus Christ," Rev. Dr. Richard Topping stated in "An Uprising Against the Disorder of the World," a paper delivered to the Presbytery of Westminster earlier this year. What a challenge that was to my narrow view of the Bible.

Karl Barth wrote: "Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the church also exists, the state has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace." The clear implication is that the state is to be resisted when it fails to provide justice, or when it enacts laws that go against the values of the kingdom (reign) of God.

H. Richard Niebuhr, as noted by Topping, highlighted the prophetic role of the church—to remind the government of its responsibility "to ensure justice, fair dealing, and the inclusion of all citizens, particularly those who get put to the margins. ... It is the church's job to help the state be the state ... and to direct the attention of the government to its failure to perform its God-given duties."

Perhaps these courageous declarations by giants of the Reformed faith will help Christians in Canada to shed our timidity and resist policies and legislation that place refugees in danger; that place profit before pollution; that elevate energy production above environment protection. Perhaps we will be more willing to witness, according to Topping, "to what is only around the corner by refusing to settle for injustice here and now."

Topping, Reformed tradition professor at the Vancouver School of Theology, also alerted me to this delightful reminder of Barth's about the proper activity of the church: "To clasp one's hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world."

The journey to justice leads over rocks and potholes; through checkpoints, red lights and detours demanded by those who want to keep the church "in its place" of pious introspection. But what the Lord requires of us—to do justice—must remain the ultimate lifestyle for the followers of Jesus. We have a long way to go but the Spirit is with us.

Rev. Dr. Glen Davis is on a one-year term as Presbyterian director of denominational formation at VST. He originally wrote this paper for Kairos.

Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

GETTY IMAGES

FAMILY

Change the World

Four easy things you can do with your kids or grandkids.

By Matthew Ruttan

Okay, I admit it. That title promises a lot! But think of it like this:

I once heard someone talk about how people think they need to make a big contribution to the world (a "legacy") in some huge, dramatic gesture. Something so head-turning and philanthropic that you get your name on a plaque or ›

FAMILY, continued

mentioned in a book. Imagine this good deed as a $100 bill and we spend it all at once.

Maybe. Sometimes.

But the way this person (theologian Fred Craddock) described it, he said life was more like spending that $100 in dimes and quarters. A "small" act of kindness here and a word of hope there. Small change to change the world.

Here are four things you can do (that are also kid-friendly) to change the world this month:

1. **Clean:** You know that nearby pathway or street that's covered in garbage? Grab some work gloves and a garbage bag and enjoy a half-hour cleaning God's planet. I did this with one of my kids the other day and we had a blast. A neighbourhood kid even came by on his bike: "Watcha doin'?" Next thing we knew, we had a helper!
2. **Feed:** You're getting ready for an outing. You're making sandwiches and grabbing some apples. Why not make an extra lunch and take it to someone downtown who needs a bit of help? It's not a huge deal to you, but it's a day-changer for someone else.
3. **Unplug:** Maybe by yourself or with your partner or family, turn off all screens for the day. Laze around, wear pajamas, play Scrabble (or Hungry Hippos). Tarry in the space and sanctity of life. Concerning the Sabbath, Hebrew language scholar Robert Alter translates Exodus 31:17 as, "He ceased and caught His breath."
4. **Say thank you:** I'm guessing that someone has touched your life in the past month. Express your gratitude. Call them up, or maybe even send a card the "old" way (How much are stamps, anyway?) We are given gifts every single day.

I haven't said anything revolutionary.

But we can sometimes get stalled in thinking that we always need to do some big thing for a contribution to be worthwhile, to leave our mark.

But the mark is you. You're Someone's fingerprint. A dime here, a quarter there. As author Ace Collins says, "Love is the one commodity we can possess that is replenished and increased when it is given away."

Good job. You just changed the world.

Matthew Ruttan is a disciple, dad, husband and minister at Westminster in Barrie, Ont. Follow him on Twitter @matthewruttan. Read his blog at presbyterianrecord.ca..

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LEADERSHIP

Preparing the Preacher

Post-Christendom unfolds daily outside the seminary window. By Keith Randall

The challenge of theological education today is to prepare leaders for a church that we can't quite see yet." Rev. Dr. John Vissers speaks from long experience. The moderator of the General Assembly in 2012 served as principal of Presbyterian College, Montreal, for 13 years until accepting an appointment as director of academic programs and professor of historical theology at Knox College, Toronto, this year. "One of the things that we work hard on in theological education is to help those preparing for leadership to think deeply and critically about both faith and the world that they see around them."

The faith has not changed, but the world we all see around us most certainly has. To some, the challenges are nothing new, indeed stretching back to roots planted 500 years ago. Dr. David Schnasa Jacobsen, now teaching homiletics at Boston University after 15 years at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary and Knox College, spoke at Presbyterian College in 2011. His subject: "Promising Signs: Toward a Public Theology of Word and Sacrament in a Time of Disenchantment." Huh?

The disenchantment, he patiently explains, referencing sociologist Max Weber and McGill philosopher Charles Taylor, saw the sacramental universe, its people bounded by a world sacred at all times, shattered by the Reformation, beginning the move to a more secular world. Another McGill prof, Douglas John Hall, gets to the heart of what Jacobsen calls Christendom's old idea of dominance and conquest declining in changing circumstances:

"When I read the scriptures, one of the things I come away with is that the promise is really something that God gives to God's people and draws them forward in faith even in the midst of vulnerability and difficulty. You think, for example, of the promise given to Abraham that allows him to leave his home and to move out to a new future he can't fully foresee. To my mind, that's the genius of the Protestant Reformation, and what I see as being so important for how churches relate to the public context is in essence recovering that powerful sense of what the promise means for engaging others in this public realm in a new way that's more vulnerable and open to others, instead of being the cultural centre and being in charge."

Jacobsen agrees that he's talking about the "missional" church we're starting to hear so much about:

"For me the theological piece of that is that the mission is God's mission. It's a God who sends. The word for mission is *missio*, which is the sending word. I think that the church needs to discover again and again that it is sent. It doesn't mean sent to proselytize and control other people, but I think it means to be sent to be engaging in the public square and work with people and participate in what God is doing in God's good, pluralistic creation."

If Vissers is not exactly on the same page, he's in the same chapter as Jacobsen. Through his study window he watches a post-Christendom world of diverse Christian faiths, other faiths and no faith at all, in which the church is increasingly in a minority. He cautions that important foundations not be washed away in a tide of new fads.

"In our tradition, the means of grace is scripture, prayer and the sacraments. That's what sustains the life of the church. In one sense, ministers are, in our tradition, ministers of the means of grace. They are ministers of Word and Sacraments. And so when we talk about all these other things we should never forget that that's the core identity."

It sounds like a narrow path to walk. David Moody, assistant minister at Chippawa Presbyterian in Niagara Falls, Ont., is one venturing toward new frontiers. The married father of three found "a holy convergence" of his business-world computer software skills and God's call to a ministry of gradual change introduced by lead minister Doug Schonberg.

"People have equated church for a long time with something that doesn't relate to their real lives, but how you make choices at work, in your home, as a parent, friend and colleague are all impacted by your faith," says Moody. "A lot of tools that the church used in the previous century were very effective. The culture's shifted and today's culture is very visual and emotional, so to speak fully about something in a language they understand we want to engage all those senses."

Not surprisingly, Chippawa's website is both inventive and inviting, live streaming services that feature both traditional and contemporary music. My conversation with Moody soon turns to that sensitive word—change. ›

LEADERSHIP continued

"The culture's shifted and today's culture is very visual and emotional"

"One of our approaches was to go slow, to work alongside the congregation, walking beside them. So we'd say, 'let's try this and see how we like it.' And there's always a willingness to say this isn't working or we need to change it. Be patient with change. There are a lot of emotions connected to the way that things are done traditionally. We lost a few people along the way. Some came back. But you have to be willing to say this is where we're going, and we're going to do it caringly and intentionally. I think you can do change lovingly and see it as a journey."

Last year, Moody surveyed growing Presbyterian churches in Canada and found that they share common ministries including relevant preaching, inspiring music in worship, Sunday morning children's programming, local mission, corporate prayer (outside of Sunday morning worship) and pastoral care.

The real measure of growth, Moody adds, is not measured in numbers but the excitement and passion he sees on Sunday morning.

"There's no reason a person has to go to church these days. There's no social pressure. You have to come because you want to, because going there is connecting you with something deeper, something you may not recognize as God's movement within you, but at least you know it's something true and real and something you want more of."

His prescription might provide a template for Christopher Clarke's summer. Raised Catholic, his parents later turned to the United Church. Parenthood drew him to a Presbyterian church where he later felt called to ministry. A student now at Presbyterian College, he dipped his toes into that water this summer at a church plant in the Ottawa suburb of Barrhaven.

"Part of my job is to figure out what works, what doesn't work, why it's working, why it's not working," he said in the spring before setting off on his adventure, "so that I can take that back to the college so that then we can start some kind of conversation about what sorts of things work and what don't."

Barrhaven's population has grown from 4,000 to 85,000 in the past 30 years, and Ottawa presbytery encouraged the new church development to grow from a failed experiment a decade ago that left wounds not yet healed. Sunday services attracted 15 to 30 attendees, and any small churches, new or otherwise, will recognize the problems of too few people doing too many jobs.

Clarke says the new congregation knew what was coming. The presbytery task force overseeing the Barrhaven church, including Rev. James Hurd of Parkwood Presbyterian, forecast that they would not like much of what he was to try and 80 per cent of it likely would not work, but they encouraged the congregation and its minister to learn together how best to reach out to the young community. An Ottawa tour guide for seven years, Clarke is comfortable on his feet, a strength that played into the range of worship styles and activities he tried.

Getting to know Barrhaven's congregants and defining their vision of the young church took much time. Experiments with relatively lengthy sermons because, as he points out, "our offering takes 35 seconds," led to including reference to current news and contemporary culture that worshippers found useful and relevant. He encouraged "passing of the peace" before the service, inviting congregants to introduce themselves to each other and gather more closely in the rented sanctuary. This led to better singing and livelier fellowship during a post-service gathering.

His detailed report to Rev. Dr. Dale Woods, interim principal at Presbyterian College, concludes: "I found that small things like meeting individually with everyone, rendering the bulletin in more modern language, implementing newer, easier-to-sing (and play) songs, adding a children's time to the service, were quick and easy ways to effect some change and get a bit of excitement brewing before moving into some of the harder work."

And the harder work will continue as Clarke and his professors and colleagues at Presbyterian College continue to develop their thinking about planting new churches. He reports that as changes were implemented over the course of the summer, it became clear that the longer the covenant between the student and the congregation, the better.

The last words in this brief overview of a new world for preachers go to Dr. Jacobsen, who reminds students to think about who they have in mind when they preach. Are those people really out there? An even better question, he adds, comes from homelitian and historian, Justo Gonzáles:

"What we need is not just to know who we're preaching to in the pews but who's not in the pews. If we're going to step out and engage people in the public square, Christian preachers also need to prepare sermons in ways that anticipate the people who are not there. That's part of hospitality, too. And hospitality is a key virtue and practice, I think, if Christianity is going to re-engage on the public square in Canada or the U.S. in this humble way that I'm calling for."

Keith Randall is a freelance writer in Montreal.

Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community

MISSION

The Business of Mission

Creating sustainability in 21st-century Taiwan.

By Kristine Greenaway

The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan's modern-day mission is rooted in a commitment to parish-level witness and outreach, and draws both on its missionary heritage and its analysis of contemporary social concerns. During my time in Taiwan I visited two parishes, a hospital, and homes for elderly people and for children with physical and mental challenges. Each is a success that combines the church's Christian values of caring for the poor, sick, ›

A view of Taipei at sunset.

GETTY IMAGES

MISSION, continued

troubled and lonely with another key ingredient: a sharp sense of project management and income generation.

During breakfast one day with the husband and wife pastoral team at Ju Dang Presbyterian Church in the village of Tek-Tung in central Taiwan, talk turned to the people whose lives have set the model for 21st-century mission in the PCT. Hau-Sheng Chng and his wife, Shin-Hui Chen, told me of past and present ecumenical and mission personnel whose ideas and support have nurtured their ministry in the rural community to which they were called 25 years ago. As they talked, I could see how they have taken those ideas and used them as seeds for what has become a truly contextual and contemporary approach to mission in their community, where Christians represent only 0.1 per cent of the population.

The chain of inspiration begins with 19th-century missionaries from Europe and North America. The Landsborough father and son team were medical doctors who brought western medicine and machines from Scotland and founded a hospital in the Taichung area. It has grown into the Changhua Hospital complex; the Canadian, George Leslie Mackay, is considered a spiritual father of Taiwan Theological Seminary; Thomas Barclay, sent by the English Presbyterian Mission, founded Tainan Theological College and Seminary; and the legacy of American nurse, Joyce McMillan, includes the Erhlin Happy Christian Home for physically and mentally challenged children and adults.

These early European and North American missionaries raised funds for their work among their families and friends and through church appeals. Today it seems more and more Taiwanese mission workers combine their commitment to Christian service with business skills.

Chng supports models for mission work that are self-supporting: their income is generated by ethical and socially responsible businesses using effective management practices. Two of his parishioners represent what I consider to be a generation of Taiwanese "lay missionaries."

Yu-Chang Lin is a polio survivor who was raised from age six in the home founded by McMillan. Today, she is the superintendant of that home and a successful social entrepreneur running a restaurant and online food sales business to provide employment for the home's young adults.

Chong-Shen Chen, a polio survivor like Lin, is the CEO of Joyce Agape printing. Chen initially borrowed money in 2005 to rent workshop space for one year. The company now employs 50 physically and mentally challenged adults who provide online design and run a print shop for more than 2,700 clients. It makes $1 million (US) each year.

Taichung's Juang San Presbyterian Church offers another example of how business acumen has allowed a small congregation to flourish. The majority of the congregation's members are indigenous people who have left their communities for the city in search of education and employment. Its pastor, Shin Liang Chen, who is Han, has drawn on his training as an engineer and experience in budgeting and personnel management to develop an incoming-generating project that has allowed the once debt-ridden congregation to pay off its building loans. The money comes from income generated by a cleaning company the congregation established

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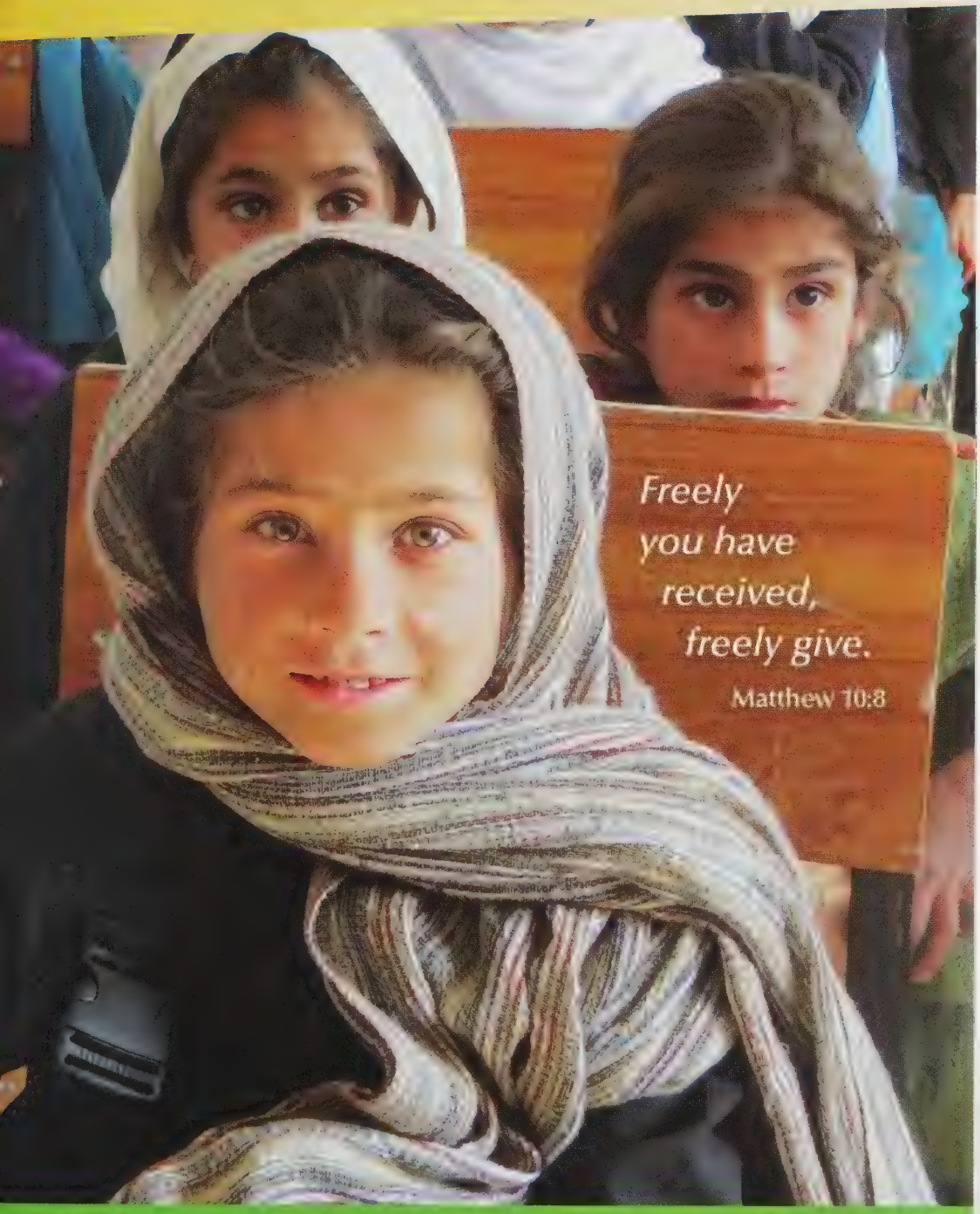

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Each financial example shows you what your donation can achieve. No matter what you choose to support, you can be sure your funds will be used effectively and efficiently to carry out life-changing programs. It is important to note that:

- your gift will help our partners carry out the overall goals of the program;
- actual costs may fluctuate depending on current and local market conditions;
- in the event that money raised exceeds project requirements, or if programs or circumstances change, donations will be used to support programs with a similar intent or location.

This catalogue contains a sampling of the projects you can support through Gifts of Change. A complete list of projects can be found online at www.presbyterian.ca/giftsofchange

You can give a gift online at www.presbyterian.ca/giftsofchange, by calling the office with your credit card information or by sending a cheque payable to The Presbyterian Church in Canada, marked with the appropriate code.

Thank you for your support!

Together we are changing people's lives.

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1-800-619-7301 or 416-441-1111

Make a difference around the world!

International Ministries sends mission personnel and supports leadership development, evangelism and innovative programs of church partners around the world. The following projects complement the work already being accomplished through your gifts to *Presbyterians Sharing*.

Buy a Minister a Bike IMBK01

In Kenya and Malawi, ministers must often travel considerable distances to teach and visit congregations in rural and remote areas. Your gift will help our partner churches purchase bicycles or motorcycles so that ministers can share God's love with more people.

$80 buys one standard bicycle

$150 buys one mountain bike

$1,000 buys one motorcycle

Share the Gift of Music IMR002

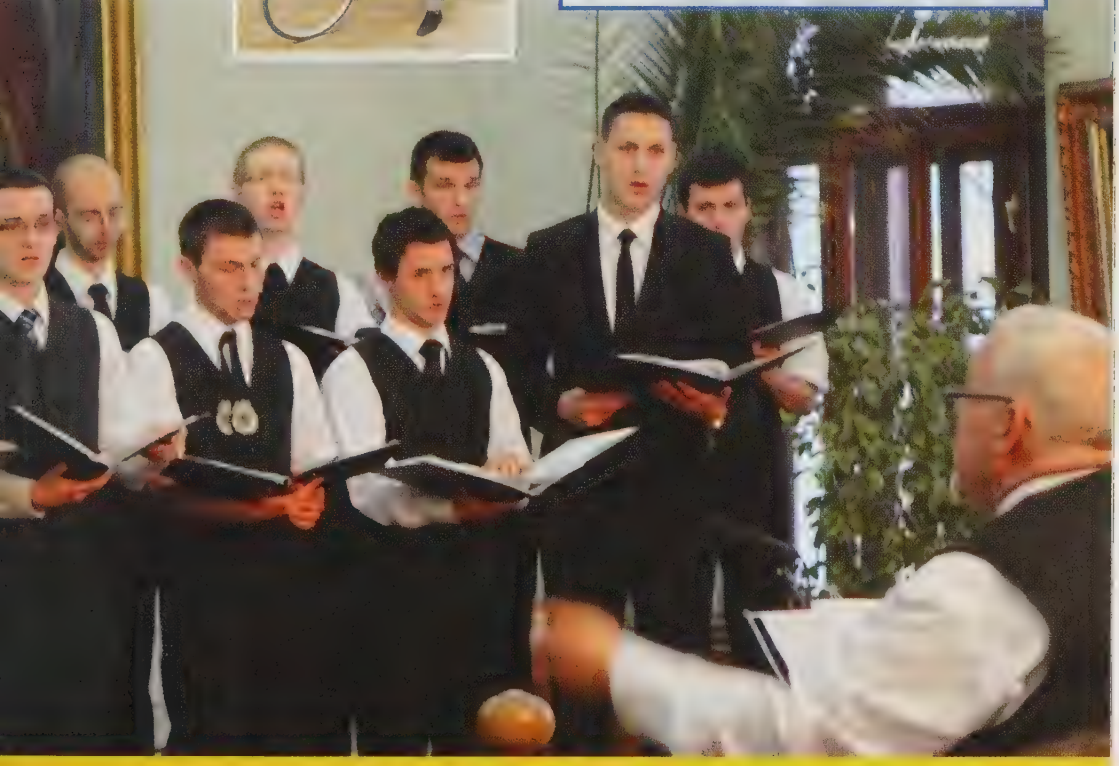
Help students from the Hungarian Reformed Theological Seminary in Cluj, Romania travel throughout Transylvania, sharing the gospel message through music.

$50 pays for programs and advertising for one community concert

$75 buys 20 copies of new sheet music

$100 provides transportation for a short choir excursion

$200 records a choir concert, enabling them to reach a much larger audience



A gift in any amount will help with all of these projects

Bring Hope to Prisoners IMMA07

Life is bleak in a Malawi prison. Activities are few, prisoners often receive just one meal a day and it can take years before their cases are heard in court. A visit from a prison Chaplain, theological students and other church visitors provides hope, and Bible studies are changing people's lives as they find faith in Christ.

$6 buys one carton of soap

$10 buys a Bible or hymnbook in Chichewa

$35 provides drinks and snacks

$70 buys two goats to provide meat for prisoners' meals

$160 provides transportation costs for prison visits

Equip New Ministers with a Start-up Library IMLB01

Your gift will help provide new graduates from theological colleges of our international partners with a start-up library of resource books, including a Bible commentary, Bible dictionary, systematic theology book and counselling handbook.

$20 buys a one-volume Bible commentary

$20 buys a one-volume Bible dictionary

$100 buys a start-up library of seven books

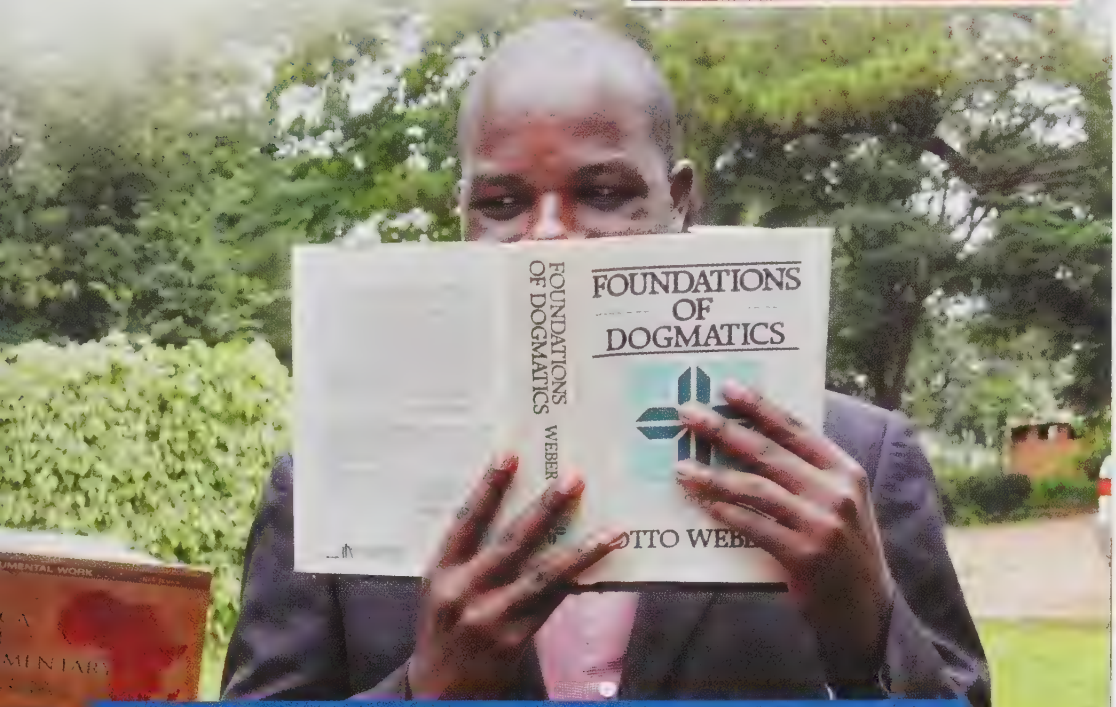
Rebuild Christian Schools IMEE01

The Christian schools of the Reformed Church in Eastern Europe offer youth a quality education in a Christian environment, in communities where belief in God was discouraged for many years. Your gifts will help repair buildings and purchase updated equipment and school supplies.

$20 buys school supplies for an elementary school student for one year

$30 buys school supplies for a secondary school student for one year

$500-$2,000 helps repair school buildings



Translate the Bible IMTA01 (Taiwan); IMNI04 (Nigeria); IMMU01 (Mauritius)

Did you know there are still some people who cannot read the Word of God in their own language? Your gift in any amount will help with translation and printing costs so that people in Taiwan, Nigeria and Mauritius can read and understand the Bible in a language that speaks to their heart.

$5 helps print the New Testament in Creole (Mauritius)

$10 helps publish a Bible in Igbo, Ezaa or Izii (Nigeria)

$15 helps publish a Drekay, Paiwan or Bunun Bible (Taiwan)

Make a difference around the world!

Sowing Seeds of Food Security PWAGR01

Subsistence farmers in developing countries work hard on small plots of land, struggling to provide food for their families. Your gifts provide food for today, but also the skills to improve crops, conserve resources, reduce vulnerability and earn an income for the future.

$44 provides tools to reconstruct canals for irrigation

$57 helps a woman start a small vegetable garden

$150 provides a goat and feed

$170 provides baby chicks and supplies for raising chickens

$250 provides a veterinary kit

Many of these programs are supported in partnership with Canadian Foodgrains Bank, a coalition of 15 church-based agencies working together to end hunger.

A Classroom for Every Child PWEDU01

While we often take education for granted, many children in the developing world – especially girls – will never have the opportunity to go to school. Education is one of the most critical tools in breaking cycles of poverty. By opening classroom doors and providing the necessary supplies, you help children reach their full potential and access better opportunities for the future.

$20 provides after-school tutoring for one child from a low-income family

$96 trains a caregiver in early childhood development

$250 helps a vulnerable child attend school for one year

Presbyterian World Service & Development

is the development and relief agency of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. PWS&D's sustainable development programs help communities around the world overcome poverty. Find out more at WeRespond.ca.

Fresh Water Renewal PWH20

Help a community access a sustainable water supply and proper sanitation facilities in order to provide clean drinking water and prevent the spread of waterborne illnesses.

$30 installs a household latrine to promote better health

$500 trains a village water committee on well maintenance and water conservation

$3,300 builds a village well or rainwater tank

Starting Life Right* PWMOM01

In Malawi and Afghanistan, child and maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the world. You can help change this reality by supporting improvements to health care systems and empowering women to make informed decisions that will improve their health, well being and quality of life. This ensures that women and children survive childbirth and lead healthier lives.

$24 trains one motivator to promote family and women's health

$300 provides a community with a bicycle ambulance

$2,760 supplies a health centre with medicine and supplies for one year

$4,500 contributes to the construction of a delivery room in Afghanistan

*With additional funds provided by the Government of Canada

A gift in any amount ensures PWS&D is able to respond where the need is greatest and helps keep administrative costs low.

From Sickness to Strength PWHEA01

Inadequate access to health care, high medical costs and limited knowledge about health prevent millions of people from living full and productive lives. Your gifts help bring health care to remote villages, tackle prevalent childhood diseases and empower communities to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS.

$15 provides a mosquito net

$120 provides care to a person living with or affected by HIV and AIDS

$640 provides health care to a remote village through a mobile health clinic

Whenever possible, PWS&D accesses additional funds from the Canadian government to make your donations go further.

Responding to Emergencies PWEMRG01

Respond to disasters, war and persecution by helping provide immediate relief, emotional support and long-term rehabilitation for people in crisis, including refugees.

$85 supplies one family with an emergency food package, lasting one month

$230 provides a winterized shelter kit for a displaced family

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHALLENGE

Healthy Babies, Happy Moms PWSSC04

Take part in the PWS&D Sunday School Challenge and help make lasting improvements to the health of vulnerable women and children. Your support will train nurses and help mothers learn how to take care of their babies so they grow up healthy and strong.

$330 trains a nurse to help mothers deliver and care for new babies

Learning and Earning a Way Out of Poverty PWESB01

A lack of jobs which pay living wages is a major barrier for people – especially women – trying to lift their families out of poverty. Your gifts provide literacy, vocational and business management training to marginalized people. This helps them access credit, start their own businesses, earn sustainable incomes and discover new opportunities.

$20 helps one person become literate

$360 provides a vulnerable youth with vocational training and employment skills

$1,000 supports a group of women to start and manage a savings group

Make a difference in Canada!

Build Bridges of Healing CM24

Help PCC native ministries work to restore relationships and provide vital services to Aboriginal people in Canada. Your gift will support counselling, healing circles, parenting classes and after-school programs, and provide shelter, food, clothing and other basic needs.

$10 provides a meal for someone who is homeless

$25 provides a basket of food

$50 supports counselling and parenting classes

$100 buys books and supplies for a student completing their high school equivalency

$150 provides food for a cooking class

Bring Hope to Inner City Children CM38

Bring hope to Canada's inner cities. Your gift helps provide at risk youth with after-school programs, summer camp, tutoring, counselling, sports facilities and the opportunity to build healthy relationships and self-esteem.

$7 buys transit tickets for a child to attend programs for one week

$40 provides one month of healthy snacks for a child in an after-school program

$75 provides an activities coordinator for one day

$100 provides a scholarship for one child to attend day camp

A gift in any amount will make a difference for all of these projects

Canadian Ministries equips congregations and supports new church development, native, refugee, rural and inner-city ministries in Canada. The following projects complement the work already being accomplished through your gifts to *Presbyterians Sharing.*

Welcome a Refugee CM31

Welcome refugees fleeing violence, conflict and poverty. Your gift helps refugees rebuild their lives in Canada with the support of Action Réfugiés Montréal.

$25 buys telephone cards for 5 refugees in detention

$50 builds community by connecting refugees in a Twinning Program

$100 provides visits to the immigration detention centre for one month

$200 helps sponsor a refugee

Give the Gift of a Smile CM34

Restore self-esteem. Your gift will help Evangel Hall provide free dental services to some of Toronto's most marginalized people giving them the confidence to rebuild their lives.

$23 buys one x-ray

$110 extracts a tooth

$200 provides a complete oral exam

$500 buys a denture

Build Christian Community CM03

Help Boarding Homes Ministry link residents of boarding homes with members of local congregations. Your gift will support pastoral care, recruit and train team visitors from churches, provide seasonal celebrations and invite the wider church to create small group community ministries in its neighbourhoods.

$10 goes where needed most

$35 provides snacks and refreshments for a house visit

$50 helps buy art and music supplies

$300 provides a Christmas or Easter dinner in a boarding home

Find more projects online at www.presbyterian.ca/giftsofchange

Give a gift that matters!

Choose Projects:

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	TOTAL:	*

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Give online, by phone or detach this coupon and mail it to:

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Thank you for your generous support!

**In the event that money raised exceeds project requirements, or if programs or circumstances change, donations will be used to support programs with a similar intent or location.*

The Presbyterian Church in Canada

under Chen's leadership.

The company services the Changhua Christian Hospital complex of nine hospitals. Many of the congregation's members work for the company. Their contributions to the church budget have allowed the parish to offer grants for the development of other indigenous congregations' programs and building projects.

The Changhua hospital itself is a story of building on the work of overseas missionaries to create a 21st-century institution. The Scottish missionary, David Landsborough, established the hospital in 1896. In recent years it has grown into an impressive medical complex supported in large part by the Taiwanese government's medical insurance program.

Christian witness is central to the hospital's mission. The hospital staff is offered the opportunity to study for an M.A. in Mission offered as an extension program by Tainan Theological College and Seminary. Between 50 and 70 of the hospital's staff of doctors, nurses and social workers participate.

The extension program is one example of the work being done by the PCT's three theological seminaries. Each is focused on training new pastors to face the challenges of 21st-century Taiwan. YuShan Seminary in the eastern region focuses on preparing students for service in indigenous communities. At Taiwan Theological College and Seminary, in the country's capital of Taipei, there is talk of non-colonial theology rooted in Taiwanese culture. The principal of Tainan Theological College and Seminary is beginning to reflect on new forms of ordained ministry in response to a decreasing number of parishes able to support full-time pastors.

The combination of Christian compassion, social justice concerns and business acumen is at the heart of successful projects such as PCT's response to reconstruction needs following Typhoon Morakot in 2009. The church created six projects in the areas that were most affected, which are home to many of Taiwan's indigenous peoples. The focus of the projects was emergency relief, reconstruction of the physical infrastructure, creation of income-generating businesses and treating post-disaster trauma in both clergy and community members. The projects had four years to become self-sustaining: five of the six have managed to meet their targets and wrapped up in August.

The combination of Christian compassion, social justice concerns and business acumen is at the heart of successful projects

Along with the successes, I learned of the challenges in the social entrepreneurship model of income generation. In some cases, members of boards of directors refuse to step down at the end of their terms, reluctant to give up the power they enjoy as directors of hospitals and other influential social institutions. There is also the danger of placing business efficiency over the values of compassion and caring. The PCT is aware of these issues and is doing its best to maintain a balance between business and social values.

Church leaders know that the PCT's mission is to be true to the gospel values of caring for the poor and marginalized. They will need to stand firm and use all their skills to keep these mission initiatives attuned to Reformed church values. What they learn in the process could be valuable to other churches in Asia and beyond.

As I reflect on mission in Taiwan in the 21st century, I wonder what churches in Canada might learn from how the PCT has met the challenge of both sustaining long-established missions (such as the Changhua Christian hospital) and creating new models of mission service (such as Joyce Agape printing). I am reminded of how some Taiwanese congregations manage to create businesses that generate enough income to be self-supporting (paying staff and overhead costs) and no longer depend on contributions from overseas churches. Indeed some, such as the cleaning company founded by Taichung's Juang San congregation, now give start-up grants to support similar initiatives by other congregations.

This social entrepreneurship model of supporting church mission objectives is one that some presbyteries and congregations in Canada have attempted, but they were not always successful. Often their projects fail to become self-sustaining, remaining dependent on external financing to help cover expenses. This means that when the "start-up" grants from the presbytery or the national church end, the project collapses.

From my previous position as head of the communications office for the World Communion of Reformed Churches, I have seen that in the Global North and other regions of the Global South, there are committed and skilled lay people who might be inspired by the Taiwanese approach to social entrepreneurship.

Kristine Greenaway was recently head of Communications for the WCRC in Geneva, and now works for the United Church of Canada. The PCC is a member of the WCRC.

BE CHURCH

You're Invited!

Ministry and the art of partying. By Seth Veenstra

Have you ever been to Prince Edward County in the summer time? It's one big party. And our church is going to be part of it, darn it. We have our own traditions and unique gifts to contribute," said Rev. Lynne Donovan, pastor at St. Andrew's, Picton, Ont.

An almost-island off the coast of Belleville, Ont., Prince Edward County has built a reputation as an arts hotspot, especially in the summer. It's no surprise, then, that the church's party plans were art-themed.

On June 9, the congregation launched an arts and culture series with "Courage to be Colourful," a visual arts showing. For the event, St. Andrew's artist-in-residence, Jeanne Campbell, and a team of local artists transformed the church's foyer and sanctuary into a gallery. The congregation then hosted 17 more events as part of their "Summer at St. Andrew's" series. Musicians performed Sunday afternoon concerts; poetry, music and storytelling events were presented Wednesday evenings. Donovan said concerts drew between 50 and 120 people, while events like a poetry workshop and history night were more intimate gatherings.

For a church that averages 40 to 50 people on any given Sunday, Donovan said overall she was happy with the turnout.

"Music, art, community—they connect us to the mystery we call God. We want to take these gifts and we want to put them right in the middle of our town. It's meant to be a conversation starter with the wider community on how we can build healthy community."

And inviting people to join in the fun, well, according to Donovan, that's ministry.

"How often do we get invited to parties anymore? How often do we gather around food and music and storytelling? It doesn't happen as much in our culture, especially when you're getting older. Well, we do that at St. Andrew's. The last line of our mission statement says: 'We will eat and drink and have fun together.' It's a reminder of what God intends for us. One of my favourite images for the Kingdom of God is a banquet."

While other churches long for days when pews were full of young families, Donovan said St. Andrew's has learned to embrace their age.

"We've managed to reinvent ourselves not through youth, but by reaching out to the Boomers," said Donovan, referring to the growing demographic of early retirees and young seniors settling in the county.

In contrast to their outreach efforts to youth, St. Andrew's discovered Boomers in Picton respond enthusiastically to the church's invitations.

"Often they're more isolated than they've ever been. They need community now more than ever.

"Last year we had 12 new members. Eleven were Baby Boomers."

That said, the congregation isn't overly focused on expanding their membership. Instead, they focus on nurturing the members they do have and widening their "circle of friends" in the community.

"'Circle of friends' is what we call our partners. And it's how they understand themselves. They're the musicians who play concerts here then come back to help with worship on a Sunday. It's the volunteers who help with our community garden or Reaching for Rainbows, our after-school program for girls at risk. It's the people who share our values—community, curiosity, and courage," said Donovan.

"We don't want to create community just for those who show up for worship. If that was the case, we might as well shut down our church."

Seth Veenstra is a freelance writer. He attends Central, Hamilton, Ont.

ISTOCK

Remembering the *Padres*

Canada's military chaplains in the Second World War.

By Tom Hamilton

Honorary Captain Robert Seaborn, Anglican chaplain of the 1st Battalion, Canadian Scottish Regiment, prays over a soldier of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division near Caen, France.

PHOTO BY AIKMAN, H. GORDON

The padre scrambled over the stony beach dodging machine gun and mortar fire. It seemed like every few feet he came across another Canadian soldier lying wounded. With total disregard for his own safety, Honorary Captain John Foote spent hours dragging these men back behind Tank Landing Craft 5, where Captain Wes Clare, the medical officer, had established a makeshift Regimental Aid Post. When the Canadians retreated off the beach at Dieppe, their padre jumped back in the water, resolved to serve his men as a fellow prisoner of war. When he arrived in Germany days later, his feet were bloodied and bruised because he had given his boots to another soldier. For the remainder of the war he served his fellow POWs in Offlag 7B, where he co-ordinated the prison chapel and visited the men in solitary confinement. For his bravery and selfless devotion, Foote was awarded the Victoria Cross—the only Canadian military chaplain to be so honoured during the Second World War.

Foote's VC was well deserved, but he was only one of the hundreds of Canadian ministers and priests who voluntarily left the relative safety of a civilian congregation to don a uniform and serve during the Second World War. In all, 1,253 Canadian clergy served as full-time Canadian military chaplains in the navy (Naval Chaplaincy Service), army (the Canadian Chaplain Service), and air force (Chaplain Service). Each chaplain service was divided into separate branches for Roman Catholics and Protestants. The Protestant chaplain branches represented clergy from the Church of England in Canada, the United Church of Canada, Canadian Baptists, and the Presbyterian Church in Canada, but also included Salvation Army, Lutheran, and Jewish padres as the war progressed.

On Oct. 5, 1939, the Chaplaincy Service Committee was established to represent Presbyterian clergy who wanted to serve as padres. While it eventually comprised as many as 13 members, at its core was the commitment and seemingly endless energy provided by its conveners, firstly Dr. Stuart Parker, followed by Dr. William Barclay, as well as its secretary Dr. J.W. MacNamara. The CSC acted as a liaison between the PCC (on behalf of clergy, presbyteries and the General Assembly) and the Department of National Defence represented by Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel (later H/Brigadier) George A. Wells.

Wells was a dominating presence as the Army's Principal Chaplain and then as the Navy's Chaplain of the Fleet. A veteran of the First World War and the Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Cariboo in Kamloops, B.C., Wells was well versed in the military and religious requirements of chaplains. There were, however, several instances throughout the war when tension developed between the Presbyterian CSC and Wells. The CSC protested, for instance, senior appointments they believed should have been awarded to Presbyterians but were given to chaplains from other denominations. One particular incident occurred over the appointment of the air force's first director of Chaplain Services. Since March 23, 1940, Honorary Squadron Leader John McNab (a Presbyterian) had worked as Command Chaplain of No. 1 Training Centre. Despite accolades from McNab's superiors, Wells believed the appointment should go to an Anglican or United Churchman.

Perhaps part of the issue stemmed from the fact that McNab raised the apparent anomaly of 262 air force members on the Trenton Base who had been listed as "miscellaneous" on the first religious census, but only a few months later a revised religious census recorded the 262 as Church of England.

On behalf of the CSC, Parker, Barclay and MacNamara petitioned Ottawa for McNab's appointment. No doubt the diligent work of the Principal Chaplain's staff chaplain, H/Major J. Logan-Vencta (a Presbyterian who had earned Wells' trust) also helped to resolve some of these difficulties. Within months, McNab was appointed as the highest ranking air force chaplain. This is but one example of the success of the CSC and its vital work behind the scenes.

Ninety-nine Presbyterian clergy served full-time as military chaplains during the war, including eight in the navy, 65 in the army, and 26 in the air force. Presbyterian chaplains served in every military district in Canada and overseas. Besides McNab, other Presbyterians who occupied senior chaplain appointments included: H/Col. J. Logan-Vencta, Principal Chaplain of the CCS in 1945 and 1946, and Rev. E.G.B. (Ernest) Foote, Chaplain of the Fleet, RCN from 1945 to 1962. Some Presbyterian padres also received formal recognition of their service: one was awarded the OBE, two received the MBE, six were given the Military Cross, and seven were "mentioned in dispatches."

The role of a chaplain was to primarily seek "the spiritual and moral welfare of the men." In his official role the chaplain acted as minister/priest responsible for church parade, the sacraments, prayers, baptisms, marriages, funerals, and for contacting and providing solace to next of kin. Unofficially, chaplains frequently found themselves as sports instructor/referee, entertainment officer, education co-ordinator and instructor in Padre's Hours, as well as counselor, impromptu tour guide, newspaper editor, and a wide variety of other actions which frequently helped boost morale.

During battle, navy and air force chaplains maintained a steadfast vigil waiting for their airmen or sailors to return. Army chaplains were supposed to remain in the rear echelons during battle, but frequently they went up the line to help drag wounded from the battlefields or assist the medical officer at the RAP.

For H/Capt. David Rowland, his work at the RAP even drew him into the direct line of fire. As recounted in *The Padre*, one of the soldiers in his unit remembered: "He was always at the RAP intercepting the wounded and dying. He did a wonderful job. I remember a lad with a serious sucking wound. He was in bad shape. They were patching him up in a thick barn and Jerry was shelling us pretty heavily. At one point a shell landed on the roof. Everything was falling in. The Padre threw himself on top of that lad to protect him with no thought for himself. He took some great risks but ... there was no fuss ... he just went ahead and did what had to be done."

99 Presbyterian clergy served as military chaplains during World War II

8 in the navy

26 in the air force

65 in the army

Presbyterian chaplains served in every military district in Canada and overseas

Such scenes of courage involved actions rarely, if ever, encountered in civilian congregations. As told in *Black Yesterdays*, Lt. Alan Earp was amazed at the depth of personal sacrifice and dedication H/Capt. Charlie Maclean brought to his ministry at his RAP: "I remember going to the RAP and seeing Maclean, Charlie Maclean, the Padre ... and seeing how hard they were working and how covered in blood they were."

Some of the greatest respect accorded to padres occurred as they tried to give Canadian soldiers the final dignity of proper burials. In praise of Rowland, an anonymous soldier remembered this incident after the breakthrough on the Gothic Line in Italy:

"He spent endless hours under a hot sun, searching out our fallen lads and preparing them for burial ... There was the Padre before us, sweating and near physical and mental exhaustion, still with that Irish smile for us and the proud word that not one of our men was then ›

unaccounted for. After a couple of words on their magnificent work that day, he turned away and carried on with the preparation of the cemetery and an appropriate service."

The spiritual influence of Presbyterian padres during the Second World War was unmistakable. Although many military personnel served with little thought of God, the war was also a time of religious awakening.

According to Presbyterian padre, H/Flight-Lieutenant D.N. MacMillan, "the evangel, the good news that God was in Christ, becoming incarnate to reveal God to us and dying upon the cross to win our salvation, is at the heart of the message of the Christian Church."

Hundreds of Canadians in uniform became members of the Presbyterian Church during the war, and many connections have been drawn between the work of Canada's chaplains and the intense growth of churches following the Second World War. Some service personnel remained spiritually indifferent, others embraced faith, yet few disputed the importance of a hardworking and compassionate padre.

Despite their own struggles with living in the field, sleeping night after night in slit trenches, battle exhaustion including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and dearly missing their families back home, Presbyterian padres provided a measure of spiritual consistency and physical courage which was noticed and respected. In the post-war years, the influence of their padre was keenly felt by many veterans. Captain Douglas Beale became a devout Christian believer because of his experiences in the war and the faithful example of Padre Maclean: "You know, he's your spiritual advisor and friend ... I have a high personal regard for him and his integrity, his low key conduct of his office, and yet you knew who he represented ..."

In the aftermath of the tragic Dieppe raid, as the wounded and demoralized Canadians struggled back to England, one of those waiting on the docks was H/Major G. Deane Johnston. He assisted by walking the wounded into trucks and distributing cigarettes. He then spent the night going from hut to hut, talking to the men, assisting in bandaging slight wounds and praying with many at their request. Over and over again he heard words of praise for John Foote. In his war diaries kept in the National Archives, Johnston noted, "all said freely that they had engaged for themselves in prayer and spoke of one craft in which they had sung hymns when under fire ... The comment of a Sgt. Major was typical: there was no such thing as an atheist on the beach at Dieppe." Commenting on Johnston's role as a padre, one of his soldiers noted, "were it possible to have such printed I could attach a list of signatures to this letter which would consist of approximately a thousand names evidencing the splendid relationship existing between the Padre and the boys."

Similar words have been used to describe the work and ministry of many of the 99 Canadian padres from the Presbyterian Church in Canada who served during the Second World War. Many Canadian veterans remembered them. We should, too.

Hundreds of Canadians in uniform became members of the Presbyterian Church during the war, and many connections have been drawn between the work of Canada's chaplains and the intense growth of churches following the Second World War

Captain Rev. Dr. Tom Hamilton examined the work of Canada's military chaplains as the topic of his doctoral dissertation: Padres Under Fire: A Study of the Canadian Chaplain Service (Protestant and Roman Catholic) During the Second World War. *He serves in team ministry with his wife, Rev. Paula Hamilton, at St. Mark's, Charlottetown, and St. Columba, Marshfield, P.E.I. They have two children, Rachel and Susanna. He also teaches part-time in the history department at the University of Prince Edward Island and serves as the military chaplain to the Prince Edward Island Regiment.*

Learning the Way

PREPARING MINISTERS TO RESPOND TO NEW CHALLENGES.

Big News

St. Andrew's Hall and VST

It has been a big news year for St. Andrew's Hall, the Presbyterian college on the campus of the University of British Columbia, and for the Presbyterian community in Vancouver School of Theology. The front page news is that Dr. Richard Topping, the St. Andrew's Hall professor of Studies in the Reformed Tradition was selected as the new principal of VST and installed in this position on October 19, 2013. He succeeded another Presbyterian, Dr. Stephen Farris, who had served as acting principal of VST for 18 months. Dr. Farris continues to serve as dean of St. Andrew's Hall. Yet another Presbyterian, Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, has been named academic dean of VST. Dr. Hans Kouwenberg retired as Presbyterian director of denominational formation and Dr. Glen Davis has come out of his own retirement to succeed him for one year. The Presbyterian presence on the VST faculty is clearly very strong. Even more importantly, the number of Presbyterians in the student body of VST is the highest in many years, perhaps ever.

These personnel changes are important for the life of SAH and its Presbyterian students because they help us to be more effective in our ministry. With the ambitious construction projects at St. Andrew's Hall now completed, SAH has funds and a new centre to use to serve the church and the university community. SAH's director of campus ministry, Sumarme Goble, and her team are finding the centre to be an ideal structure for the renewed emphasis of the Hall's ➤

on-campus ministry. According to recent census figures, only 45 per cent of the population of B.C. identifies as Christian. An even smaller minority of the UBC community is Christian and yet many are seekers of spiritual renewal. Respectful and appropriate witness to the gospel is a must in a situation like that.

The Elders' Institute, led by Dr. Roberta Clare, continues to provide programs to strengthen the effectiveness of elders and other leaders across the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The online courses offered in the coming months can be found at eldersinstitute.ca. A particular emphasis will be "webinars," a way of providing quality online workshops inexpensively to the church.

VST continues to have a strong emphasis on native ministry and on knowledge of and respect for other world religions. The recent Truth and Reconciliation event in Vancouver emphasizes the importance of the first. Having neighbours of so many other religions reminds us that we cannot ignore the latter.

VST's financial position has improved, due to reorganized operations and generous donations, notably a gift of $3 million to endow the Butler Chair of Homiletics (Preaching) and Biblical Interpretation. Combined with the strong financial condition of SAH, Presbyterian students will benefit from new and innovative programs to educate effective leaders for a 21st century. We look forward to serving these students and the entire church in the continuing mission to be an effective witness to what Jesus Christ is already doing in our world.

The Elders' Institute, a ministry of St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver

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Leading with Care

Online Course

This interactive, three-week course explores "Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults in The Presbyterian Church in Canada." Open to everyone. Technical support available.

All theological students are welcome to take this course free of charge.

Instructor: David Phillips
January 27 to February 14, 2014

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Group rates available

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What If?

Presbyterian College, Montreal

Over the last three years, Presbyterian College has been working on a strategic plan that arose by asking a simple question: What if?

What if a seminary gave students the opportunity to gain experience in starting a new church? What if the seminary itself started a new

church? What if a seminary gave students the opportunity to explore the gifts required for congregational renewal? What if a seminary didn't just graduate students and then hope for the best, but stayed with them in their early years of ministry? What if a seminary invited young people onto its campus so that they could explore their own gifts for ministry?

Presbyterian College is working toward fulfilling the vision raised by these questions.

We have established a mentoring program for new grads and now have 18 who meet monthly by video conference to discuss challenges in ministry, continue their learning and pray for each other.

We have redesigned the Master of Divinity program to provide the opportunity for students to gain valuable experience in new church development or congregational renewal during the months of May, June and July. August is a mandatory paid month off so that students learn to take Sabbath rest seriously and come back to their studies rested and with new questions raised from their work experience.

The college is considering partnering with a local Presbyterian congregation and the Presbyterian chaplain at McGill in planting a new worshipping community so that it can learn firsthand what is involved in this important ministry.

In June, the college invited young people aged 18-25 to come to Montreal to explore their gifts for ministry. Participants examined what we mean by vocation, discovered some of their own gifts and went back to their congregations to preach a sermon prepared during the week. The college continues to receive positive feedback about this formative, eye-opening experience from both participants and their ministers.

The mission of Presbyterian College is to equip leaders who will equip congregations to engage in God's mission in the world. It remains committed to a thorough theological education but it envisions much more, not simply for the sake of doing more, but because we worship a God who says, "Behold, I am making all things new."

Opening Doors

Knox College, Toronto

Knox College has been preparing women and men for ministry across the country and around the world for close to 170 years. It is a recognizable and enduring symbol of the strength of a ➤

Reformed tradition in a world that is constantly changing. But Knox is much more than a seminary and a building. Knox has a rich history of opening its doors to the world, creating a global community and helping shape the future.

As has been tradition for the past 100 years, Knox has both a theological student community and a University of Toronto resident student community within its walls. These two groups intersect, living and sharing together their personal and academic lives. The entire community benefits from the insights and challenges posed by peers studying theology, engineering, architecture, law, art, or medicine. They also benefit from the international and inter-cultural perspectives that are part of the diversity of those at Knox.

In today's world, be it a career in ministry or in medicine, an understanding of the world is an asset. For students heading off to the mission field, having lived and studied with students from other parts of the world is a significant advantage. For those entering a

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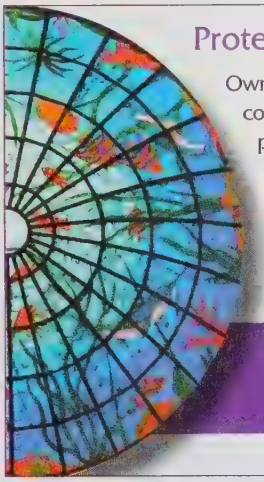

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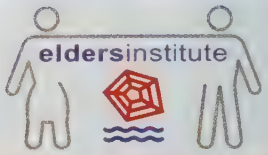

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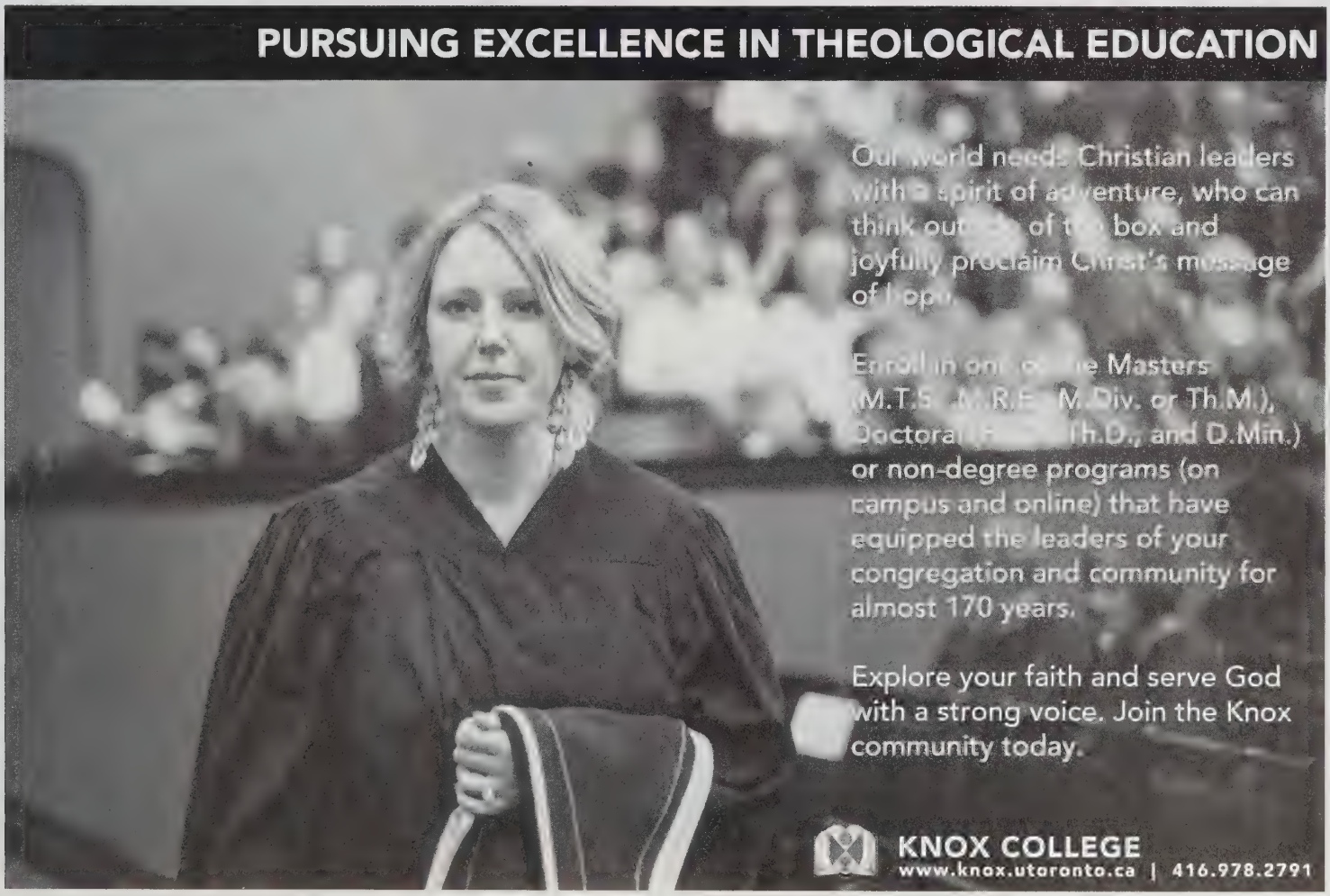
helping profession, having a sense of Jesus' teachings adds to one's sense of compassion and justice. And, for someone studying architecture or engineering, having lived in a building that was wisely constructed all those years ago, there is a different understanding about the importance of sacred and communal space.

This integral part of the college community is what is so critical to the formation of tomorrow's leaders. The research that students and residents are undertaking at Knox and on campus will build a better world for all of us. It is a place that nurtures globally-minded, highly adaptable students who will enable congregations and societies to thrive in this constantly changing world.

As the world around us changes, so too do the faces that make up the Knox College student body and the programs in which they enroll. Today, our student population is almost 40 per cent female and includes those from other Reformed traditions including the Korean Presbyterian Church abroad and the Evangelical Holiness Church. Despite reduced numbers in congregations today, Knox has experienced an increase in enrollment in not only our Master of Divinity program, but also in the number of students enrolled in the Master of Theological Studies program (a 25 per cent increase this year alone).

Joining these students in the classrooms and Caven Library are students researching and reflecting in doctoral and advanced master's degree studies. Many of these students come to Knox through global partnerships that are in place with seminaries in many parts of the world, particularly Taiwan, Korea and Cuba to pursue doctoral studies. As part of their intercultural exchange, students study theology in a context different than their own and upon completion of their degrees they return home to lead and teach the future leaders of their respective denominations.

It has been said that the best way to predict the future is to create it. For this reason, Knox College continues to foster and prepare leaders for tomorrow—leaders who will guide us through the challenges of our ever-changing world and help shape a Christian future. ■



Everyday Samaritans

We can all be heroes.

By Alex Bisset

The author of Luke's gospel tells us that one day Jesus told a story to his disciples and the crowd that had gathered around him. Jesus' listeners included a lawyer who was trying to test Jesus by asking questions that he thought Jesus would have trouble answering. The story that Jesus told in response to the lawyer's questions is about a man who was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. Along the way, he was attacked by a group of bandits, who beat him and robbed him and left him lying at the roadside.

Three other people came down the road, one by one: a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan. The first two passed by the beaten man, but the Samaritan stopped to help him: bandaging his wounds, taking him on his own animal to the inn, and paying for whatever care the man might need in the coming days (Luke 10:30-35). The Samaritan is clearly the hero of this story, while the priest and the Levite, perhaps even more than the robbers who caused the problem in the first place, are seen as the villains.

It is easy to see the heroism displayed by people who play a role in tragic or cataclysmic events. The soldier who risks his or her own life to protect those who are unarmed and vulnerable, the first responder who rushes towards a disaster that everyone who has any common sense is running away from, the military chaplain who provides comfort and consolation while surrounded by terror and destruction; all of these are undoubtedly heroes. They could even be called extraordinary heroes. And it is important to tell and to hear the stories of such heroes, especially in this season of remembrance.

On a much smaller scale, it is also easy to see the heroism in someone who stops to help a stranger in need. Because of Jesus' story, we call such people "good Samaritans." This phrase is even used by people outside the church who have never heard the original story.

But what about those of us who live out our lives without finding ourselves in situations of tragedy or danger? What about those of us who never have the opportunity to be a hero in such an obvious and dramatic way? Can we still be heroes, too? Is there an opportunity for heroism even in our normal, mundane, peace-filled lives? We know what extraordinary heroism ›

GETTY IMAGES

looks like. But what does ordinary heroism (if we can call it that) look like?

Well, there is a wonderful scene, near the end of *The Wizard of Oz,* in which the Wizard tells the Cowardly Lion that he is wrong to think of himself as having less courage than those who are seen as heroes. As a token of this, the Wizard gives the Lion a medal for courage. The Lion, the Wizard says, has courage and heroism, but those qualities have never been recognized in him, either by himself or by others. And I believe that this is the case with most, if not all of us as well. All of us have within us what it takes to be heroes.

But if we can all be heroes, what is heroism? Albert Szent-Györgyi, the Hungarian-born physiologist who won the Nobel Prize in 1937 for discovering vitamin C, is credited with saying that "genius is seeing what everyone else sees, and thinking what no one else has thought." I would propose that heroism, perhaps, is seeing what everyone else sees and doing what no one else has done. This, in a nutshell, is the message of Jesus' story of the man who was beaten by robbers. What sets the Samaritan apart from the priest and the Levite is not that he sees something they don't see. All three see the beaten and bleeding man lying by the side of the road. What sets the Samaritan apart as the neighbour or the hero of the story is he does something for the man, while the other two merely see the man and continue on their way.

I have been an ordained minister for seven and a half years now, serving two small congregations in the east end of Toronto. In that time, I have done a lot of thinking about what ministry is. And I am convinced that the work of a minister consists of doing those things that no one else in the church has the

The church, like the Samaritan, sees things and does something about them. That is ministry. And that is heroism

training, the skills, or the time to do. Some of those things are obvious, like preaching on Sunday morning, leading Bible study, or visiting the person in palliative care when no one else can quite bring themselves to do so. Some of those things are less obvious, like being on-site to meet the furnace repair technician, or sprinkling salt on that icy patch on the sidewalk early Sunday morning, or taking a plunger to the clogged toilet. That is to say that ministry is about more than what we train ministers to do, or even set them apart to do. And while doing the mundane things around the church may not be seen as ministry, as long as they are done to make it possible for the community of faith to gather together to worship, study, and fellowship, they are forms of ministry. Now I am not suggesting that no one else does anything; people in my congregations see and do things that I see and don't do, and are therefore engaged in ministry as well.

And all of that means that ministry in the contemporary world is itself a form of heroism, for it consists of doing something about things that others see and do nothing about. And by ministry, I mean not only the ministry carried out by ordained and diaconal women and men like myself, but ministry carried out by lay people as well. The difference between the church and much of contemporary society is not that the church sees different things than society does. It is that the church does different things than society does. Society, like the priest and the Levite, sees things and passes by. The church, like the Samaritan, sees things and does something about them. That is ministry. And that is heroism.

Ministry means not just seeing the person who is lonely, but stopping to talk to them (and seeing them again and again if necessary). Ministry means not just seeing the person who is hurt, but doing something to take away their pain. Ministry means not just seeing the person who is afraid, but holding their hand to show them we are with them. Ministry means listening to the person no one else will listen to (and trying hard to understand their perspective). Ministry means hugging the person no one else will touch. Ministry means loving the person no one else will love. Ministry means not only recognizing that people in the world are searching for meaning and spirituality, but having the courage to offer Jesus Christ and the community of faith to them as a way of quenching that thirst. All of this is ministry. And all of this is heroism.

Some months ago, I got a call after supper telling me that a member of one of my congregations, who was in hospital, was not doing well. The family wondered if I would visit him. It was a Monday, and while I hadn't taken the day off, I had not intended to see anyone, so I hadn't shaved and was dressed even more casually than usual: a faded pair of blue jeans and a T-shirt that had seen better days. But when I got that phone call, I pulled on a hoodie and headed out the door without a second thought.

At the hospital, I prayed with the patient, spoke with his wife, and then went into the lounge to talk to their daughter. The daughter was speaking with another person when I came in; she introduced her as one of the hospital chaplains and said that I was her parents' minister. I looked down at my clothing, shrugged my shoulders, and apologized that I didn't look very much like a minister that particular day.

The chaplain smiled and said, "I saw you a few minutes ago. I walked past the room and saw you, on your knees, beside the bed. You were holding the patient's hand in your hands, and your face was pressed up close to his face and you were praying. If that isn't what a minister looks like, then I don't think I know what a minister looks like."

So what does an ordinary hero in this contemporary world look like?

Perhaps we should ask the Samaritan. Or, perhaps we should ask our minister who accompanies people through the various stages of their lives. Perhaps we should ask the elder, who makes the phone call no one else makes, to ask if things are okay. Perhaps we should ask the member, who knocks on the door that no one else bothers to knock on, to drop off a loaf of banana bread.

Or perhaps we just need to look at ourselves and notice those times when we saw something that others saw, too, but we were the ones who actually did something.

And then we need to make sure that we are heroes more often.

Rev. Alex Bisset is minister at Riverdale and Westminster, Toronto, and serves as chaplain to Branch 10 of the Royal Canadian Legion.

FROM THE MODERATOR

Being Without

Purging our possessions. By David Sutherland

Peter and John are in the temple in Jerusalem. A lame man approaches them for spare change. They have none. So Peter speaks these immortal words which have both haunted and guided the Christian Church for centuries: "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand and walk." Out of what they did not have, they gave the man far more than he asked or hoped.

The Holy Spirit gathered, empowered and guided the church to speak the truth about the Messiah with boldness and clarity. Christian thought, lifestyle and witness were being moved beyond the comfortable. And then, this, the church offering gifts from what we did not possess rather than what we did.

I am in India as I write. We are visiting Christians whose witness we support and some of the people whose lives are forever changed by your generosity in Christ. Mothers tell of all they have learned and how they are now able to provide for their families. Young men display their accomplishments and the strength that arises from Christian values. Presbyterian Church in Canada, you have done well. Tomorrow we leave for the medical mission in Jobat and our visit with longtime Presbyterian missionary, Pauline Brown. That will merit a column of its own.

What would we newly understand of the Christian gospel if we became a church of the tent instead of the cathedral?

While in New Delhi, we had the honour of visiting with the passionate Christian theologian, Prof. James Massey. It was he who quoted Peter's comment from the third chapter of Acts about silver and gold. Dr. Massey is a member of the Dalit or "outcaste." He and his colleagues work on the edge of a primitive recycling facility among the very poor. Workers from his offices go into the surrounding village helping these outcasts adjust to the new India. It is getting more difficult for the Christian poor in an atmosphere of growing Hindu fundamentalism.

He points out the number of important events in scripture that take place "outside" the city or centre of attention, including the death and ressurection of Jesus. He is well published and offers a unique perspective for all Christians. Being without enables the church to see and to do what it cannot when it is preoccupied with its possessions.

I think of the early church out of Jerusalem with its clarity of message and transformative power. I think of our own church and congregations as we face the realities of a secular Canada. We are groomed to live as a majority but we are being called to learn the ways of a minority. We are so easily preoccupied with our assets.

What would our congregations be like if we let go of our buildings and investments? What would we newly understand of the Christian gospel if we became a church of the tent instead of the cathedral? Are there things your congregation could do if you did not have to maintain a building?

Rev. Dr. David Sutherland is minister at St. Andrew's, St. John's.

THE OTHER SIX DAYS

Cowboys, Confessions and Incarceration

You can find it all online. By Bradley Childs

CONFESSIONS

The world is changing quickly. But so is confession. If you are or know a good-quality Catholic who has some unforgiven sin guilting his or her conscience—oh boy, have I got an app for you! It's called Confession: A Roman Catholic App and it is exactly what it sounds like. You download it for just $2.00 and then you confess to the priest on the other end. When it was originally created, Bishop Kevin Rhodes greatly approved of it. Later on, however, Pope Benedict commented, saying it could never replace confession before a priest in person. But wait, there's still hope. Many reports are now saying that the newly elected Pope Francis might just come out in favour of such a thing. So it was in, it was out, and now it might just be in again. The world sure is changing quickly and maybe those Catholic friends of yours have just found a good way to spend that toonie hiding in the couch.

DOWNLOAD IT @ itunes.com.

PASTOR IMPRISONED IN IRAN

It has been a very tough journey for Pastor Saeed Abedini, an American citizen in prison in Iran for proselytizing. Over one year ago, on his ninth trip back to his homeland, while building an orphanage in Rasht, Saeed was detained and officially charged with "compromising national security." He was sentenced to eight years in prison, and some fear he may face the death penalty. As one might expect, his wife, Naghmeh Abedini would rather not have that happen. And she's been getting a lot of publicity. She even got the attention of the president of the United States. And she spoke at the United Nations in Geneva where the strangest thing took place. She actually bumped into the new president of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, in the hallway and asked an aid to hand him a letter written by her husband. For a year she'd been trying to get in contact with anyone who might listen and, as it turns out, the president himself was staying on her floor. What happens next? Who knows.

FIND IT @ youtube.com. Search "Abedini CNN."

Naghmeh Abedini, speaking about her imprisoned husband, on CNN.

A REAL-DEAL COWBOY CHURCH

When I lived in Edmonton and used to work for the Moravian Church, I was aware of a church that held a "cowboy" service. Here in Regina where I currently live, I know of a service that has a bluegrass band and I know of a very good sized "country service." And I like that (not that I like 'country mind' but I do like diversity). But that's not quite what I'm talking about here. I'm talking about the Cowboy Church of Santa Fe County, New Mexico, because it's the real deal. There's a chuck wagon in the parking lot, saddles in the sanctuary, pastors wearing Wranglers, and oh yeah, after the service, instead of just coffee they have barrel jumping in their church/rodeo barn. Got little 'uns? No problem, because they'll strap a helmet on those suckers and teach 'em how to ride a sheep.

FIND IT @ cowboychurchofsantafe.org.

Rev. Bradley Childs in minister at First, Regina.

ST. ANDREW'S, SASKATOON
First installed and dedicated nearly 30 years ago, two beautiful stained glass windows now have a new home. Dedicated in memory of two Parkview, Saskatoon, elders in 1984, the windows were later "rescued" shortly after the church closed in 2008. This past September they were rededicated to the glory of God at St. Andrew's, where many former members of Parkview now attend. Pictured here are former members of Parkview who made the move.

People & Places

Find more online at presbyterianrecord.ca

Starting January, People and Places will be an online feature only. Photographs can be uploaded at presbyterianrecord.ca.

ST. ANDREW'S, BOWMANVILLE, ONT.
The congregation joyfully welcomed back their former minister, Rev. Noel Gordon and his wife, Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon, as they celebrated the baptism of their twin grandchildren, Nadia and Declan. *Pictured are Rev. Noel Gordon, Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon holding Nadia Elizabeth Padrelin, Rev. Anita Sipos, current minister at St. Andrew's, mother Sarah Padrelin (née Gordon), and father Ely Padrelin holding Declan Xavier Padrelin.*

ST. COLUMBA BY-THE-LAKE, POINTE-CLAIRE, QUE.
The last weekend in September, members and friends of the congregation travelled up to the Mont Tremblant area for their annual retreat. Immersed in the spectacular colours of creation they studied, worshipped and enjoyed fellowship together.

NATIONAL OFFICES, TORONTO
"Time flies fast around here," joked Kevin Vance, a mailroom assistant, who in September celebrated 25 years of service at national offices. At a staff-organized party, Kevin received warm thanks on behalf of the church and a gift of appreciation—a watch he wears proudly. Here he cuts his cake while Barbara Nawratil, senior administrator of Support Services, looks on.

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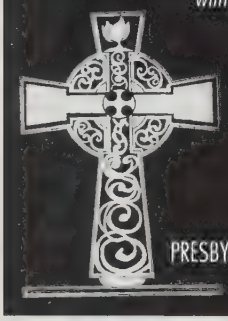

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Hosted by: Carters Professional Corporation. **Date:** Thursday, November 14, 2013. **Time:** 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. *Portico Community Church, 1814 Barbertown Road, Mississauga, Ontario.* **Cost:** Early Registration fee is $30.00 per person (plus HST) ($40.00 after November 8, 2013, plus HST). **To register,** call Toll Free 1-877-942-0001 x230, Fax 519-942-0300, Email seminars@carters.ca or visit our website www.carters.ca. **Brochure, Map & Online Registration available at:** www.carters.ca/pub/seminar/chrchlaw/2013/brochure.htm

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- Saint John, N.B., Saint Columba; Half-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Wendy MacWilliams, 28 Somerset Dr., Hanwell, N.B. E3C 1M8; 506-206-5031; wendymacwilliams@rogers. com.
- Tabusintac, N.B., St. John's; New Jersey, Zion and Bartibog, St. Matthew's; Full-time three-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Derek Krunys, 206 Wellington St., Miramichi, NB E1N 1M7; dkrunys@hotmail.com.
- Truro, N.S., St. James and St. Paul's; Full-time minister for two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Michael Koslowski, 2-75 Altavista Lane, Halifax, NS B3N 0A1; 902-402-6747; michaelkoslowski@eastlink.ca.

Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario

- Arnprior, Ont., St. Andrew's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Seung Kim, 24 Ethel St., Petawawa, ON K8H 2C1; 613-687-2463; seung37@hotmail.com.

Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda

- Elmira, Gale; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Karla Wubbenhorst, c/o Westminster-St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, 206 Victoria Rd. N., Guelph, ON N1E 5H8; 519-763-9215; kwubbenhorst@yahoo.ca.
- Markham, Markham Chinese; Full-time associate minister for English-speaking ministry; Interim Moderator Rev. Sam Priestley, 19 Elm Lea St., Markham, ON L3P 3M8; 905-294-1633; sam.priestley@bell.net.
- Mount Forest, St. Andrew's and Conn, Knox; Interim Moderator Rev. Andrew Apack Song, 51 Church St., Elora, ON N0B 1S0; 519-846-0680 (church) or 519-846-8028 (home); andrewapack@gmail.com.
- North Bay, Calvin; Minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Les Drayer, c/o Calvin Presbyterian Church, 401 First Ave. W., North Bay, ON P1B 3C5; 705-495-4660; search@calvinpresbyterianchurch.ca; calvinpresbyterianchurch.ca.
- Scarborough, Fallingbrook; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. J. P. Ian Morrison, 17 Earswick Dr., Scarborough, ON M1E 1C7; 416-460-5214; ian.morrison@sympatico.ca.
- Toronto, St. Andrew's Humber Heights; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Sean Howard, 3819 Bloor St. W., Toronto, ON M9B 1K7; 416-233-9800 x 202; sean@standrewsislington.org.

Synod of Southwestern Ontario

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obituaries

Ballard, A. James, a catechist from 1969 to 1982 in Barnesville, Hampton and Sussex, N.B. During his ministry a new church was built in Barnesville. Jim was born in 1916 in Hastings, England and emigrated to Canada in 1926, supporting his orphaned family with a radio shop in Toronto. He later moved to Warkworth, identified with the Presbyterian Church there and started taking services as an elder. His giftedness for gospel ministry became widely know. On retirement he moved back to Campbellford, Ont., and was active at St. Andrew's, Trenton. He returned to New Brunswick in 2008. He died on June 12, 2013, and he was buried from St. Paul's, Hampton. The service was conducted by Rev. Kent Burdett.

Duke, Rev. Thomas Arthur Aubrey. Thomas Duke went home to his Lord on Tuesday, September 10, 2013 from his nursing home in Toronto at the age of 96.

Tom was predeceased by his beloved wife of 54 years, Charlotte. Loving father to Arthur (Ruth), Douglas (Ann) and Elizabeth (Mark). He was the very proud grandfather of eight grandchildren and brother to Reay (Jean).

Tom was born in Port Carling, Ont., on August 11, 1917 to Arthur and Ann Elizabeth Duke (née McCulley). He graduated from the University of Toronto in 1943 with a bachelor's degree in Theological Studies from Knox College and was ordained in Port Carling.

Tom served in Presbyterian churches in Campbellton, New Liskeard, London and Seaforth/Clinton. He far surpassed his college ambition to be a "lowly minister" and will hear from his Master, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

In retirement at "Heart's Content" (the house his father built in Port Carling), Tom was a very active minister emeritus at Knox Presbyterian Church and was also active as a volunteer in the Port Carling community.

Donations in Tom's memory may be made to Presbyterian World Service and Development.

Woodley, Jean Elizabeth, faithful member and respected elder of Knox Presbyterian Church, Dundas, Ont., died June 4, 2013. A kind, caring lady of deep faith who served God with humility and grace.

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FOR THE JOURNEY

When Peace Broke Out

Christ brings light to the darkest of places. By David Webber

A young German soldier climbs out of the trenches with a flag of truce and walks right into the gun sights of the other side

Remembrance Day and Christmas are both heavy on my mind. Lately I have been working on learning the John McCutcheon ballad, *Christmas in the Trenches*. It's a poignant song that tells the tale of a young English soldier in the trenches during the First World War.

It's Christmas Day, 1914. Soldiers on both sides are hunkered down in their miserable trenches. They are trying desperately to survive the human meat grinder that caused more than 37 million causalities in four bloody years. Wafting over one of the bitter cold and unusually still battlefields of France, there comes a lone German voice. It's singing a Christmas carol. Soon his comrades join him in harmony. Not to be outdone, the boys from the English side respond with *God Rest Ye Merry Gentleman*. The German side counters with *Stille Nacht* and soon both sides are singing *Silent Night* together in their own languages.

A young German soldier climbs out of the trenches with a flag of truce and walks right into the gun sights of the other side. Soon men from both sides put down their weapons and walk into No Man's Land as peace breaks out in the midst of a muddy, bloody war. Soldiers from both armies exchange gifts of chocolate, cigarettes and pictures of family back home. Before sundown, a friendly soccer match is played before soldiers drift back to their opposing trenches.

My grandpa was a veteran of that horrible "War to End All Wars." He served with the famed 54th Kootenay Battalion and spent from 1915 to 1918 in the trenches of all the major battles. I have just finished polishing all of his medals and mounting them in a frame for display beneath a picture of him with the 54th Battalion band. It makes the McCutcheon song particularly poignant for me.

The story that the song tells is apparently a true one. McCutcheon has said that a veteran once told him that the only thing that is perhaps not accurate in the song is that it implies the 1914 Christmas truce only happened one time, at one point along the miles and miles of trenches on the Western Front. Apparently, much to the chagrin of the war command on both sides, it happened several times at several different places along the front line, which meandered all the way from the North Sea to the Swiss frontier with France. In fact, it has been estimated that the unsanctioned Christmas truce of 1914 involved over 100,000 British and German soldiers. It has been documented that in some places along the front it took until New Year's for the war command to stir up hostilities again. And if that is not grand enough, it is reported that peace broke out in a similarly unorchestrated and very unmilitary way during Christmas of 1915. Recently it has come to light ›

ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY FALLS

that Canadian troops reported in their letters home that a similar Christmas truce happened at Vimmy Ridge in 1916. It appears that for at least three of the four horrible years of the First World War, the gospel of Jesus Christ, remembered and sung out in the midst of battle, had the power to cause peace to break out in spite of the masters of war who vehemently forbade it and in some cases viciously prosecuted those who participated.

This story of peace breaking out in the midst of a particularly dreadful war as the gospel of Jesus Christ was recalled and carolled on the battlefield, give the words of Jesus an amazing trajectory. In the gospels, Jesus spoke often about peace. At one point in John's account he is quoted as saying: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27). The apostle maintained that this peace surpassed all human understanding and had the capacity to guard one's heart and mind when it broke out in the midst of the conflict and turmoil surrounding one's life (Philippians 4:7). I wonder; is it really true? Is it really true that the peace of Jesus can break out when any peace at all seems impossible and that it can significantly change people and even situations?

History would seem to indicate that it is. But beyond that, over and over again, personal testimony would say that it is true, too. I have my great grandfather's diary from 1910. He was a Methodist missionary working the extremely stormy waters and rugged coastline of B.C. on the mission boats, the *Udahl* and the *Homespun*. There is an entry telling about him conducting a worship service on Monday, February the 7th and he writes: "... (today) my son Fred V. Webber gave himself to Christ of his own free will. Praise God!"

My grandpa was 18 years old when he gave his life to Christ that day. I have the premium leather bound Bible given to him by his dad around the same time. It quite obviously and literally went through the trenches with him. It is battle-worn and scarred like you can hardly imagine. But the amazing thing is that grandpa didn't come back from the war that way. Grandpa, who was truly a second father for me, was perhaps the most intact and peace-filled person I have ever known. He not only found personal peace in his turmoil-filled life, but he seemed to bring peace into any situation that he was involved in. Did I mention he was a soldier through the entire Second World War as well as the First, and survived the Dirty '30s to boot? No one will ever convince me the peace that broke out in him and through him came from any other source than Jesus Christ.

So this Remembrance Day, I am pondering this peace as I recall the many wars of the past century, my grandfather and Jesus. Is there any hope for me as I face the turmoil and battles in my own life and times?

This morning I was awakened early to listen in prayer. Jesus was there, too. He quite literally said: "Peace be with you, David." And as I pondered that seeming impossibility, he whispered: "Trust me."

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of several books.

"I used to think that the Talib would come, and he would kill me. And then I thought, if he comes, what will you do, Malala? Then I would reply to myself and say, 'Malala, just take a shoe and hit him.' But then I said, 'If you hit a Talib with your shoe, then there will be no difference between you and the Talib. You must not treat others with cruelty, and harshly. You must fight others, but through peace, and through dialogue and through education.'"

– Malala Yousafzai, as spoken on The Daily Show with Jon Stewart. Sixteen-year-old Yousafzai was shot in 2012 in her native Pakistan by Taliban soldiers for speaking out on girls' education. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and recently received honorary Canadian citizenship.

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"I struggle to work love into the fibre of my kids' thinking. I struggle to create and inhabit a home where peace is tangible. I struggle to do good work in the face of too-much-to-do. ... All the thousand repetitions and reminders, the silliness and stories and late-night worry sessions. All the times that we stay up late, working for those we love, and the times that we fall into bed early to be ready for the next day. Our work is received and made into something good and useful and maybe even beautiful."

—Katie Munnik, The Messy Table
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DECEMBER 2013

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KHAILEE DGNO, 6, KNOX, WATERLOO, ONT.

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Holy Awkwardness

Carollers discover what can happen when you step out in faith.

HEATHER BOYD,
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RACHEL SUN, 13,
ST. ANDREW'S,
STREETSVILLE, ONT.

FOR THE RECORD

Playing God

It's what we are called to do. By David Harris

If Canadians hadn't been sidetracked by the shenanigans of senators and the mayor of Toronto we might have been having a long-overdue debate on euthanasia—and maybe another on creating rules around medical engineering and building the bionic human.

Both issues are newsy enough to have been cover stories in recent issues of *Maclean's* magazine. And both are profoundly related to our faith, especially the incarnation of God in Jesus that we celebrate at Christmas.

Each time these challenging medical-ethics issues are raised in the media, two things strike me. The first is how religion is often blamed for stifling debate and change—yet there is practically no discussion in the Christian community about these issues. Secondly, among those who do invoke religion to oppose liberalizing laws, they almost always declare that humans "shouldn't play God" in these matters.

Regarding the first point, I'm not suggesting religion isn't a factor in political lobbying. Roman Catholics and conservative evangelicals lobby politicians and tell their members what they deem is right and wrong.

But stating dogma shouldn't be confused with healthy debate.

As for playing God, that is or at least should be at the heart of these debates

for Christians.

In Genesis, God gives humanity the responsibility for caring for creation: We are essentially called to act on God's behalf in everything we do that affects life (including its conclusion in death).

In the incarnation, God enters fully into the human experience, from gestation to death. Through that mystery, as members of the body of Christ, we are called to participate in Christ's work of returning all of creation to its source.

Playing God is simply taking our baptismal vows seriously and acknowledging that God's grace is present everywhere in creation and in every issue that affects human life.

The development of medical care itself is just such an example. If we didn't want to play God, we should never have developed medicine. Then we could make God responsible for every death.

But surely our faith is more sophisticated than the feeble theology that concludes that when someone dies prematurely it is because "God wanted to take them home." By that logic, my parents should have let God take me many years ago when I first had pneumonia as a child by not making sure I got antibiotics. I'm glad I got the drugs.

So we are right to act responsibly in extending attempts to help and heal people. But that responsibility surely extends to the extremes: at the beginning of life and at its end.

I am not suggesting that we need to impose our values on the country. But we can hardly contribute to these debates in a helpful manner if we haven't done the hard work of thinking through our positions.

Our minds are a precious divine gift and these are challenging issues with many perspectives and facts to be weighed. Christmas is when we celebrate God's most precious gift of love to us in Jesus.

May that love inspire us in all we do and think. And may you and your family experience that love richly this Christmas and be showered with blessings in the new year.

David Harris is the Record's *publisher and editor.*

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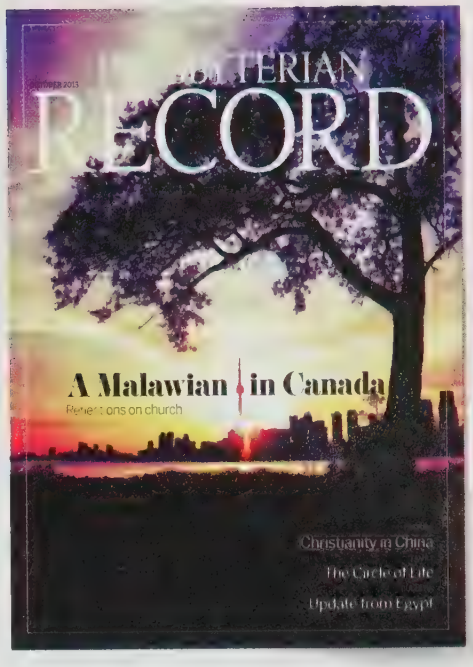


Jesus and the Bonsai Tree

Re The Church of the Bonsai, October

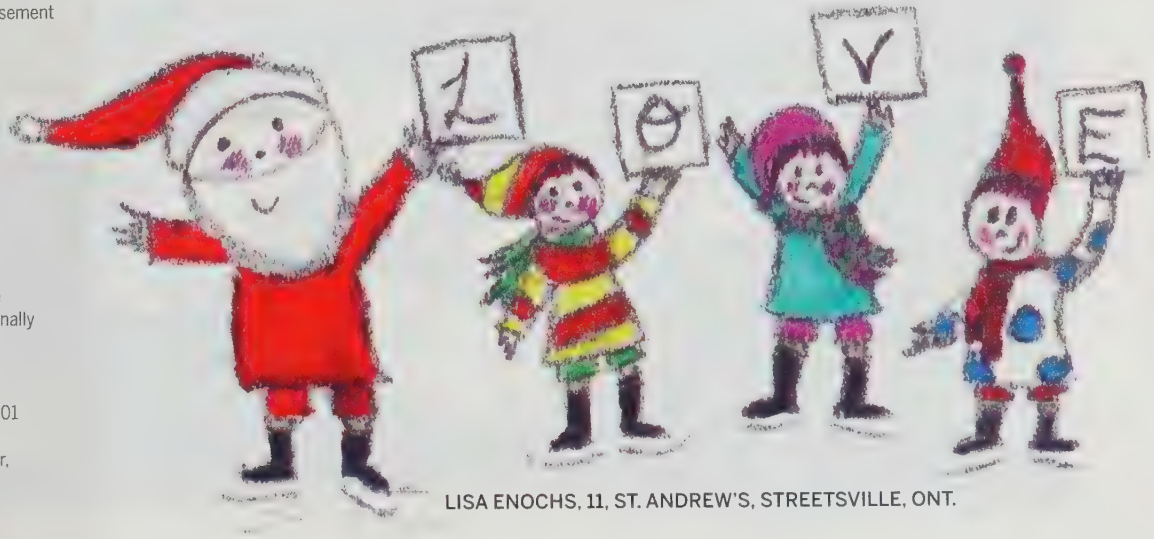
Just like bonsai trees, fruit trees get pruned to give us the best results. Even the Bible advises us to cut off the branches that do not produce. However, not all trees are created to give us fruit. Some are created just to be admired and appreciated, and with the help of pruning shears—even more beautiful. If you do this on a small scale, you create a bonsai tree. Jesus would have loved it.

BOB MUNNIK, NANAIMO, B.C.

Debating Marriage

Re The Question Is Coming, November

It seems simply wrong to say that "Calvin privileged one aspect of marriage"—namely, the dimension of economic support. Yes, in particular circumstances, that of abandonment, he looked for a way to support the vulnerable and saw divorce as a legitimate response, practically and theologically speaking. But does this legitimize the blanket statement that in his understanding of marriage he privileged one good (economic dimension) over the goods of mutual support/companionship and children? Rather, I assume that in general terms (in his preaching and pastoral care) he affirmed and pronounced the importance of all three dimensions. As the saying goes: "hard cases make bad law." Focusing on the reintroduction of divorce, ›



LISA ENOCHS, 11, ST. ANDREW'S, STREETSVILLE, ONT.

for specific cases, does not give us a full picture of how Calvin understood marriage and its goods, and we shouldn't suggest otherwise.

While *Living Faith* "is silent on" and does not "acknowledge" the economic dimension of marriage, this does not permit us to slip into the statement that *Living Faith* "does not recognize" it as one of the goods.

Given the fundamental continuity on the goods of marriage, I simply cannot trace out any kind of trajectory in this argument that leads to the subject of same-sex marriage. Vague notions about discontinuity do not lead to questions about the fundamental nature of the institution. Indeed, it remains to be asked whether the definition of marriage is exhausted by outlining the goods of marriage, as seems to be suggested in this article.

ROLAND DE VRIES, MONTREAL

Blair Bertrand replies:

For me, the crux of De Vries' critique lies with the line "given the fundamental continuity on the goods of marriage." Where I lift up revision/reform based within a tradition, De Vries minimizes any substantive revisions/reforms to the tradition. For instance, in terms of Calvin's understanding of marriage, De Vries is quite correct in his assumption that Calvin's relationship to marriage is more complicated than I made it out to be. Calvin does hold many of the traditions of marriage, including the three goods.

Living Faith is both a product of its context and in continuity with its tradition. It includes some of the items found in the Westminster Confession of Faith but introduces others not considered by the divines as important to include. I was highlighting something that was different and the way that I read De Vries, he is highlighting the continuity. I don't see either of us denying the three goods of marriage but I focus on the changes in the ways that they relate and De Vries emphasises the continuity.

In the end, I am fine with that because it places us into a more faithful place in my opinion. The church is always in a conversation, a dialogue, with the ways that God has acted in our midst in the past and the ways that God demands fresh obedience in the present. The intent of my piece was not to come down on either side of the question but to challenge both sides. For those who argue for the "traditional" form of marriage that is enshrined in *Living Faith*, I hoped that they could see that the institution of marriage has changed over time. This does not mean that they need to change but it does mean that they need to acknowledge that change is a reality, even in the ways that we understand marriage.

For those who argue for same-sex marriage, I hoped that they would place those arguments within a traditional theological understanding of marriage rather than on settling for "the spirit of the times." This does not mean that they can't do so but it does mean that they should engage with the hard questions posed by it.

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Jesus 101

Re Walking The Talk, October

"[It] was in Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians'" (Acts 11:26).

This is the first definition of a Christian in the Bible. The Christian was a follower of Jesus and was defined by those outside the church because they had a different way of life. Later definitions of a Christian ... were more suited to the church as an established mainstream institution in society. We are coming to the end of 1,700 years of the church being an established institution, at least in Western societies.

Living Faith 8.1 deals with discipleship within the context of the institutional church. The church is likely to survive as communities of disciples in the future. The disciple is the key. Change Theology 101 to Follow Jesus 101, and fill the *Presbyterian Record* with the practical experiences and challenges of following Jesus to give readers a change from the comfortable bubbling and often shallow brook of church or ecclesiastical language.

ANDREW MITCHELL, ONLINE

The Best Pages to Continue

I read with dismay and anger that People and Places is going to be discontinued in the magazine. In so doing you are creating two kinds of Presbyterians: First class Presbyterians who subscribe to [the] internet, and second class Presbyterians who by choice are being punished because they do not.

People and Places are the best pages in the *Record*. I read it first and sometimes nothing else. The format is superb ... with news of congregations large and small, far and wide.

Please reverse your decision. This is dreadful.

MARGARET JEAN GRASSIE, TORONTO; TRANSCRIBED FROM A PHONE MESSAGE

Editor responds: Ms. Grassie wins. People and Places will continue.

Correction: Our apologies to Iain Nicol, whose name we misspelled in the October issue.

Oops! Some of you may have received a misprinted copy of the November issue. Please contact us at dleader@presbyterian.ca or 1-800-619-7301 ext. 308 for a proper copy. Or, visit our website for the full digital version. We regret this error.

ehm 100 YEARS
A community of compassion
A place of hope

A Centennial Christmas Prayer

This year Evangel Hall Mission will celebrate Christmas for the 100th time. We anticipate the coming of Jesus into the world with longing and expectation. We look forward to a season of joy. "I come to proclaim good news to you – tidings of great joy to be shared by the whole people." Lk 2:10

Sadly for many individuals Christmas is not a time of joy but time of sadness. They lack and want what Christmas represents - fellowship, caring and compassion. The fruit of compassion is hope and the fruit of hope is joy. We provide food, clothing and shelter but above all we offer spiritual care and love. We help to make Christmas as season of joy for all of our participants.

This Christmas help us to help others experience the love of others and the love of God. Our financial need is great because the need of those we help is great. Your support will help ensure we provide food, fellowship and love for the 100th time this Christmas and for many years to come.

"For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future with hope." Jer. 29:11

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Heavy Hearted Holidays

Faith doesn't make life easier. By Andrew Faiz

Merry Christmas.

I guess.

I enter this season heavy hearted. As I write the weather is cooling, the leaves turning, falling. This year I feel sadness and anger. A dear friend died over Thanksgiving weekend and I can't think of a good reason for it. I'm angry over her death; I'm not sure whom I'm angry at. Many blame God—why did God let this happen—but I don't know what hand God played. It happened. And I don't like it.

She was a lovely lady, energetic, young. Our children have been friends since they met in the toddler room eight or nine years ago. The families grew close and a few years ago we met in Greece for a day, our holidays intersecting not-at-all by coincidence.

When my own mother, and two decades earlier my father, passed away, I was sad, but not angry. Uncles and aunts have gone. They all had good long lives and had moved on to the final glory. Over the years some friends, my own contemporaries, have died, too soon, their lives cut early. I have mourned for them but this one death, this one has crossed my emotional line. I'm angry.

Offering me condolences, or heaven help me, blessings, spikes that anger. I don't want blessings because a dear friend died at 50. There was no good reason for it.

I suppose I don't really understand God. I want God to be this omniscient puppet-master; and I want there to be a reason, a purpose, for everything and everybody. If I give God thanks for all the good in my life, then is God not to blame for all the bad?

Faith doesn't make life easier; part of me wants to indulge in anger, if it wasn't for this other feeling connected to Christ

These are raw emotional thoughts and no amount of theology softens them. I can't put my intellectual knowledge to work here because I miss my friend and see the pain on the faces of her mother, husband and son. I feel that pain as well.

Jesus helps some. His humanness touches me. He seems too extraordinary at times, too driven to purpose, but at other times he is all too human, emotional, irrational even. Pragmatic often.

Jesus' birth matters, and helps. There is darkness hovering over the manger: the extreme poverty into which he's born, the babies who will die because he is alive, the political and social upheavals his life triggers.

And of course, the noise of this season is the light that shines from the birth of the Christ child. We live in both, in the dark corporeal shadows, in the bright saving light. It makes my head spin at times; squeezes my heart. Why, I ask often, why?

I have no answer—oh, I have a thousand answers, I read, I listen, I've heard many sermons, I've been to many funerals, I know the promises, I know the theology. I know many things. But, I have no answer.

I have loss and anger. Raw emotions. And someplace, also raw, also emotional, is a feeling, faint right now, that a child born in a manger centuries ago, somehow connects me to a profound mystery filled with unfathomable beauty and sometimes sadness.

Faith doesn't make life easier; part of me wants to indulge in anger, if it wasn't for this other feeling connected to Christ.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *managing editor.*

BULLETIN

Community and World News

PHOTO COURTESY OF SUPPORTSCOTTJONES.COM

Community Rallies for Scott Jones

Church organist recovering after assault.

By Connie Wardle

It's a story of tragedy and hope that has elicited support from across the country and around the world. On Oct. 12, in the town of New Glasgow, N.S., Scott Jones was attacked and stabbed twice in the back, severing his spinal cord and leaving him paralyzed from the waist down.

The 27-year-old is the organist and choir director at First Presbyterian, New Glasgow. The church hired him in August, just two months before the attack, when he returned to the area after teaching English in South Korea. ›

continued...

As Jones gradually recovered in a Halifax hospital, his family, friends and community launched a fundraising campaign. Even Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield helped spread the word by posting a link to the fundraising website on his Facebook page. As of Nov. 4, donations and special events had brought in $86,000 for a trust fund to support Jones.

"[Scott is] all energy, all enthusiasm, and has the greatest gift of drawing music out of people," said Rev. Glen Matheson, minister at First. He said two days before he was attacked, Jones had started up a new community choir for recent immigrants, which attracted about 50 people the first night.

"And the energy and enthusiasm he drew out of these people was just incredible to watch. You can't learn that from a book. You can't write that down as a job description. It's just a spirit that he has within him."

The session has kept Jones on full salary, and the congregation has begun remodeling the building so that when he returns in a wheelchair he will be able to access everything he needs to do his job.

"[There was] a God moment the Sunday before Scott was injured; he played the entire service on the pipe organ without using the foot pedals," Matheson said. "He doesn't know why, but he just did it. ... When we asked Scott, why did you play without your feet? [He said] 'I thought I'd do something different for a change.' So it's been exciting because that was everyone's fear—can he play the organ from now on? And the answer absolutely is, 'yes.'"

In a message posted online on Nov. 4, Jones thanked those who have supported him and said he hoped to be able to move to a rehabilitation facility soon.

Nineteen-year-old Shane Edward Matheson of Trenton (who is not related to Rev. Glen Matheson), is facing charges of attempted murder, aggravated assault and possession of a dangerous weapon.

Although police are not calling it a hate crime, family and friends have suggested Jones may have been attacked because he is gay. Matheson said Jones' sexual orientation has "not been an issue for the congregation."

"We love Scott," he said. "We love the way God created him, with many gifts and talents. It doesn't matter who you are or what you are or what language was your first language or what your nationality and heritage is, we were created by God. And this congregation has been so amazing in how they've responded. I'm humbled and proud to be their minister. After 24 years here, I thought I knew everything about them but they continue to amaze me."

He said he was also amazed by emails from congregations across North America. "We've been reduced to tears a number of times reading these," he said. "It's a new road. It's a journey that none of us have travelled before. So it's a learning curve, but to know that we're not walking this journey alone has been just incredible."

Connie Wardle is the Record's *staff writer.*

ONLINE EXTRAS:

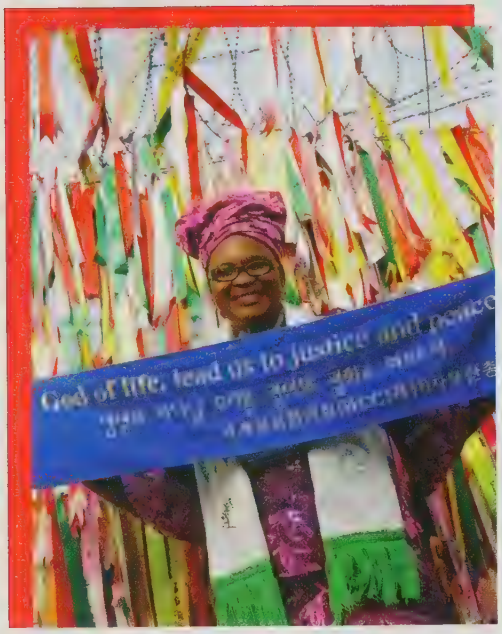
- West Toronto Gives $100,000 to PWS&D's typhoon appeal.
- Rev. Dr. Richard Topping installed as the new principal of VST.
- The LMA committee discusses biennial assemblies, PWS&D's online survey and more at its fall meeting.

TEAM PWS&D RAISES OVER $10,000 IN TORONTO MARATHON

A team of runners raised about $10,500 for Presbyterian World Service and Development in the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon on Oct. 20.

Among the 13 team members—who each ran either a 5-km, half-marathon or full-marathon route—was Webster Moyo, a Malawian who oversees some of PWS&D's HIV/AIDS programs in his home country. As an orphan, Moyo received support from PWS&D when he was in school. He was in Toronto for meetings with the PWS&D committee.

This is the second year a team of runners have raised money for the church's relief and development arm through the marathon. Both times they have surpassed their goal of $10,000. *—PWS&D*



As part of the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan, South Korea, delegates travelled to Imjingak, near the demilitarized zone, and covered a fence with prayers for peace. Pictured is Oubunmi Adedoyin Badejo from Nigeria.

NEW BOOKS RELEASED

By Amy MacLachlan

Two Presbyterian ministers can now include "author" on their resumes.

Rev. Scott McAndless, minister at St. Andrew's, Hespeler, Ont., has written *Caesar's Census, God's Jubilee.* It examines the story of Jesus' birth as told in the gospel of Luke and struggles with the historical puzzles that arise from it.

"It may give you some wonderful new perspectives on the Christmas story as you look forward to preaching on it and reflecting on it this year," said McAndless in an email.

Rev. Peter Coutts, a general presbyter with the Presbytery of Calgary-MacLeod, wrote *Choosing Change: How to motivate congregations to face the future.*

"A recent study has shown that 79 per cent of all North American congregations do not have sufficient motivation to pursue significant change," Coutts told the *Record.* "*Choosing Change* address[es] this need by introducing motivation psychology to the field of congregational change."

Both books are available through the WMS Bookroom.

PWS&D Visitors

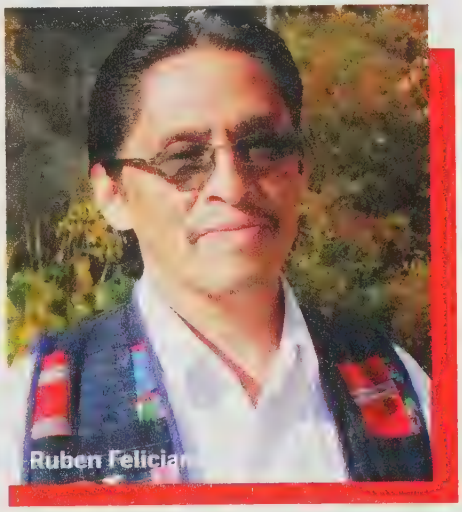
Two international partners visited national offices in October for meetings with the Presbyterian World Service and Development committee, sharing both the joys and challenges of their work.

Webster Moyo works with the HIV/AIDS program at Ekwendeni Hospital in Malawi. As supervisor of their home-based care project, he ensures that people afflicted with AIDS can be supported in their homes, which includes medical assistance and support for domestic chores.

In Guatemala, Ruben Feliciano is the director of the Maya-Mam Association for Research and Development, an organization that works to strengthen the identity and community spirit among the indigenous Maya Mam people, and to protect their rights—particularly rights of land ownership.

In Feliciano's small community, the Canadian company Goldcorp Inc. operates a large gold and silver mine (despite protests from locals), with little regard for the health and livelihood of the people who live there.

According to Feliciano, since the mine began operating in 2003, children have developed skin conditions, water has been contaminated, conflicts among neighbours have begun, and many people—often poor—are lured off their land with large cash offers from the mining company. The government, which supports the mine, has made it illegal for the Mam people to protest. The community is losing its cultural identity, families are splitting up, and the land is being stripped of its resources.


Ruben Felicia

Feliciano told the *Record* that despite the huge challenges, he has hope that with the support of the church, the voices of the Maya Mam people will be strengthened.

"We want our opinions to be respected. We did say, no," said Feliciano, through a translator. "We hope that the mine closes, and that they will stop exploiting our people and our land." —*AM*

BOTTOM: AMY MACLACHLAN. TOP: JOANNA LINDÉN-MONTES/WCC

JUSTICE

Conflict in the DRC

What's in your cellphone?

By Brockenshire Lemiski

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is suffering through an extended, devastating conflict. Armed groups, rebels, the national armed forces and UN intervention teams clash violently, part of a war that has taken more than five million lives since 1998. Sexual violence is terrifyingly common, contributing to the DRC's reputation as the worst place in the world to be a woman.

During my Presbyterian Church-funded internship with Project Ploughshares, the peace research centre of the Canadian Council of Churches, I researched the origins and impact of armed conflicts around the world.

The DRC is home to vast mineral deposits, but this natural wealth does not contribute to the wellbeing of the Congolese people. Instead, armed groups occupy villages and towns, enforcing their authority with violence. They take control of mines and profit from the export of minerals, enabling them to continue their human rights abuses and extending what is already the deadliest conflict since WWII.

Four of these conflict minerals are of particular importance. Mined largely in the DRC under questionable human rights standards, wolframite, cassiterite, coltan and gold are then processed for the manufacture of electronic components found in cellphones around the world. My phone is built with conflict minerals. So is yours. As such, our consumer choices are contributing to the ongoing war in Central Africa.

There is only one mobile phone currently available that is considered "conflict-free." By partnering with NGOs that track supply chains, Netherlands-based Fairphone uses ethically sourced tungsten and tin in its phones. However, by their own admission, the other 28 minerals used in Fairphone production come from unknown sources.

SO WHAT'S BEING DONE?

Eighty per cent of the world's mining companies are headquartered in Canada. Many Canadian mining corporations' poor practices are well documented by human rights activists: forced evacuations, unsafe labour conditions and disregard for indigenous land claims. There are legal battles being fought to hold companies accountable.

The Canadian government is, in some ways, attempting to clean up the mining industry. Prior to 2008, Canada was instrumental in the establishment of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and currently supports its Regional Initiative on Natural Resources, which aims to break the links between armed conflict and the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

More recently, Paul Dewar, the official opposition critic for Foreign Affairs introduced a private member's bill to Parliament last March. Known as the Conflict Minerals Act, Bill C-486 "requires Canadian companies to exercise due diligence in respect of the exploitation and trading of designated minerals ... in seeking to ensure that no armed rebel organization or criminal entity or public or private security force that is engaged in illegal activities or serious human rights abuses has benefited from any transaction involving such minerals."

If the bill passes, mining companies must design and implement strategies to respond to risks associated with resource extraction. If Canadian companies do use conflict minerals, they must report their activities to the Canadian government.

BEING GOOD STEWARDS

The extent of the connection between our electronics and war in the DRC is not immediately clear. But as Canadians who benefit economically from global resource extraction, and as Presbyterians committed to stewardship of the earth, we have a responsibility and an opportunity to support justice initiatives that will make a difference. This is not about sending western "expertise" overseas to "fix African problems." This is about being accountable for our complicity and taking concrete steps to resolve a decades-old conflict. Minerals are everywhere. Conflict doesn't have to be.

Brockenshire Lemiski is a musician, grant-writer and community organizer living in Kitchener, Ont. He was the fourth peace and security intern at Project Ploughshares, a position funded by the PCC.

HOW TO HELP

- Request a presentation on conflict minerals at your church by contacting **kwjustminerals@gmail.com.**
- Sign the petition in support of the Conflict Minerals Act (Bill C-486) at **petition.ndp.ca/conflictfree.** Read the full text of the bill at **parl.gc.ca** by searching 'C-486'.
- Contact your MP to voice your concern about conflict in the DRC.
- The PCC's Justice Ministries works with Kairos on issues of resource extraction, but more can be done with the vocal support of Presbyterians.

Faith.

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THEOLOGY 101

Pray for Peace

Living Faith seeks justice.

By Daniel Scott

Living Faith 8.4 and 8.5

God is not always fair, but God is always just. I recently prepared a sermon on our Lord's parable, "The Workers in the Vineyard." Jesus' story tells about labourers receiving the same pay for different hours of work. In our reckoning, this discrepancy—of equal pay for unequal work—doesn't seem right. In the words of the tax advocate commercial, "It's not fair."

Somehow we expect God's justice to always be fair. And, in turn, we expect that we should be fair as well. After all, *Living Faith* declares: "God's justice is seen when we deal fairly with each other" and "justice seeks fairness in society" and "it ›

THEOLOGY 101. continued

JOHN STUART, ERIN PRESBYTERIAN, KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

requires fair laws justly administered."

I wonder though if there seems to be a fixation on fairness in *Living Faith* and in contemporary society that sees fairness as equivalent to justice. John Rawls of Harvard University famously argued that, "Justice is Fairness." But as one critique of Rawls put it, "the fallacies in Rawls' theory are not simply the product of a naivety in thinking that fairness will automatically come about by consensus in a pluralistic society. Rawls' fundamental problem is his underlying rationalistic, Enlightenment belief that man is essentially good and will, through self-respect, ascend to higher moral goals, choose proper societal principles, and be able to put them into practice nationally and internationally."

Is fairness beyond our grasp as humans? A noble goal, but perhaps not attainable.

On the other hand, *Living Faith* gets it right when it claims, "God is always calling the church to seek that justice in the world which reflects the divine righteousness revealed in the Bible." God in His grace bestows righteousness on the unworthy, so that the people of God are called upon to "seek justice" (Isaiah 1:17) in the sense of pleading for the widow and "[judging] the cause of the poor and needy" (Jeremiah 22:16). Biblically speaking, justice connotes goodness (Luke 23:50) and loving consideration (Matthew 1:19). There is little evidence to suggest that in biblical categories, justice equals fairness. In fact, sometimes, to borrow the phrase from Shakespeare's twisted sisters in *Macbeth*, "fair is foul."

Not only is God calling the church to "seek justice," but also, as *Living Faith* says, "Christ, the Prince of Peace, calls his followers to seek peace in the world." Our subordinate standard suggests that we "seek peace" when we "protest against the world arms race;" when we "fear nuclear war;" and when we "affirm that God is at work when people are ashamed of the inhumanity of war." It further urges us to "pray for peace."

What *Living Faith* fails to include is a broader understanding of peace in the sense of biblical *shalom*. The Old Testament word for peace, *shalom*, means "completeness," "soundness," and "well-being." If we are to seek peace, then we must be concerned about much more than issues related to war. We must be working to bring about "*shalom*," in all its rich nuances, to all aspects of society.

I'd like to give an example of an organization with which I am involved. This is one way we can pray for peace, though not the only way: Over 800 mothers die every day in childbirth from preventable causes. In the 20th century, pregnancy and childbirth killed more than tuberculosis, suicide, traffic accidents and AIDS combined, and more women died in childbirth than soldiers were killed in both world wars. And for every woman who dies in childbirth, about 20 women suffer injury, infection or disease—approximately 10 million women each year.

Seeking peace (and justice) means we need to do something about issues such as the tragedy of maternal death.

Save the Mothers, a small Canadian NGO, is training cross-disciplinary professionals in East Africa to bring about the systemic change needed there to ensure that women don't die in the effort to give life. We are educating and equipping business leaders, journalists, politicians, social workers and clergy to seek justice and peace—through their own occupational spheres of influence—for mothers and their babies.

Rev. Dr. Daniel Scott is the minister at St. John's, Bradford, Ont., associate professor at Tyndale University College, Toronto, and the managing director of Save the Mothers.

DEANA WEYMAN, ST. ANDREW'S, KING CITY, ONT.

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

Powerful Love

We are adopted into God's own family. By Emily Bisset

Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 22, 2013
Matthew 1:18-25

Joseph's love for Jesus, and his mother Mary, was risky. As a man of honour and tradition from the family of King David himself, the trouble had all begun for Joseph when Mary, his virgin fiancée, had whispered those incredulous words: "I'm pregnant."

Joseph was caught in the middle—caught between the law that said Mary should be stoned and the power of love that said he should have mercy. After great struggle we can only imagine, Joseph came to the best resolution he could. He would keep things quiet and go to Mary and tell her it was over. But he would not bring charges against her. To do less would be horrible—sending Mary to disgrace and even death. But to do more would be crazy. ›

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY, continued

DEANA WEYMAN, ST. ANDREW'S, KING CITY, ONT.

It would be going outside the bounds of what scripture said. It was a risk that a person of faith could not take.

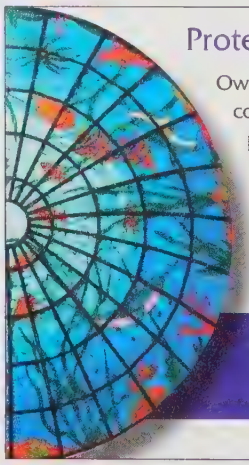
But then, of course, came the dream and the angel and the living voice of God. The angel of the Lord meets Joseph right at that intersection between his fear and his faith. God speaks to Joseph and tells him that as a person of faith, he must take this risk and take Mary as his wife. That was the beginning of the dangerous, costly path of love that Joseph and Mary and Jesus would follow for the rest of their lives.

Joseph does trust God; now he is in; he is hooked. But Joseph's love for Jesus was different. Not less, just a different kind of love. Mary would not have had the same kinds of questions that Joseph had. She carried Jesus inside her for nine months. She knew he was as much her flesh as he was God's Son. Joseph's love, however, is the tremendous, powerful love of adoption—when a child that is not of your own flesh and blood becomes truly "your" child. When Joseph held the baby in his own arms, he took him as his own. The tiny baby confirmed what he had heard from the angel. This is Emmanuel—God with us. And this was his own son.

He watched and helped him grow and question and change. He shared his joys and defeats in love

It is not unlike what happens in the church, when the church is truly being the church. When parents bring their child to be baptized, the church is asked to love this child and raise this child as its own—nurturing him or her in the Christian faith. And if the church wants a model of what that kind of love looks like, we must look not to Mary and her instantaneous, immediate love for Jesus, but to the love that Joseph had for Jesus. It is love you choose to give fully. Joseph regarded Jesus as his own child, going to great lengths to keep him safe. He watched and helped him grow and question and change. He shared his joys and defeats in love. This is the same love God shows us through the church, when we are adopted into God's own family through baptism and a congregation accepts the risk of truly being the church.

Rev. Dr. Emily Bisset is minister at Calvin, Toronto. Her "Joseph" was First, Meadville, Pennsylvania, which took its baptismal vows seriously and was a vessel of God's formative love.



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RENEWAL

Not Just Baby Jesus

Helping Christmas visitors connect the dots. By Fred Stewart

My two rural churches will open their doors to a good number of visitors this Christmas Eve, if history is any predictor of the future. As our context becomes more and more secular and un-churched, there is a growing challenge for us to convey more than a partial story of the greatest event in history to those who come.

Will Farrell is a creator of comedic (some would say, silly) movies and, I believe, an expert on culture and the funny gaps that exist therein. In *Talladega Nights,* he portrays an over-the-top version of a southern, NASCAR-driving, out-of-touch, self-absorbed redneck named Ricky Bobby. ›

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RENEWAL, continued

Farrell zooms in on the character's simplistic theological understanding of who Jesus is and what he has done. For Ricky Bobby, Jesus is stuck forever as a baby who exists to answer prayers.

"Dear Lord Baby Jesus, we'd also like to thank you for my wife's father, Chip. We hope that you can use your Baby Jesus powers to heal him and his horrible leg. It smells terrible and the dogs are always bothering with it...." This is but one example of Ricky's invocation of his version of Jesus.

Of course this is an exaggerated characterization. Yet there is some truth in Farrell's character. If folks don't know the rest of the story or if they simply prefer to ignore the radical call of Jesus to live and love like him, then picking the Baby Jesus version becomes attractive.

Here is our challenge as we prepare Christmas services that will serve both faithful folks who come to worship many times a year and those who show up once or twice: share the whole gospel. Sing Christmas carols that include Christ's incarnational mission to redeem humankind. Speak of creation, fall, promised Messiah, perfect life, obedient death, triumphant resurrection and coming Kingdom. In a phrase, connect the dots.

It was a wonderful night when the dear Saviour was born. But it wasn't just a beautiful story in itself. It is part of God's great story. It is a story of the whole written word and the Living Word. But most importantly, it is a story that the Triune God continues to invite people to be part of. How unfaithful would we be if people came to see the Baby Jesus and left without knowing that they could know the God of Creation, the Redeeming Saviour and the Holy Spirit now and forever?

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship.

Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

ARIANNAH SOOKNANAN, 9, NORTH BRAMALEA, BRAMPTON, ONT.

FAMILY

Cooking Up Fun

A fruitcake recipe and game in one.

By Donna Jean MacKinnon

In the 19th century, games and activities were expected to be edifying. While a Victorian mother may have found baking with her children a pleasure, she felt much better about the experience if it was also instructive.

Because the Yuletide is almost upon us, I thought it could be fun for families to try this challenging cooking riddle. I guarantee it's as exciting for today's liberated children as it was for a prim child of 1880. This recipe is a classic and I'm sure many readers have seen it in the past. For those who are not acquainted with Bible Cake, the first step is to find the ›

FAMILY, continued

ingredients by looking up the Old Testament verses indicated in the recipe. You could invent variations on this activity, such as organizing a competition to see who lists all the ingredients first. This heritage recipe may well become a family tradition for special occasions like Christmas. Bible Cake could also be made and sold, as a fundraiser, with the recipe attached.

After you have successfully figured it out, check the answers before proceeding with the fun of baking the cake. This recipe results in a rich, dense fruitcake.

ABRAHAM, 9, ST. ANDREW'S, STREETSVILLE, ONT.

For those who are not acquainted with Bible Cake, the first step is to find the ingredients by looking up the Old Testament verses indicated in the recipe.

BIBLE CAKE

Prepare a loaf pan. Pre-heat oven to 325 degrees.

Cream together:
- ¾ cup Judges 5:25
- ¾ cup Jeremiah 6:20

Beat in:
- 3 Jeremiah 17:11

Stir in:
- 2 ¼ cups 1 Kings 4:22
- 1 cup 1 Samuel 30:12
- ½ cup Nahum 3:12 (chopped)
- ¼ cup Numbers 17:8
- 1 tsp 1 Samuel 14:25

Season to taste with: 2 Chronicles 9:9

Add:
- a pinch of Leviticus 2:13
- 1½ tsp Amos 4:5
- ¼ cup Judges 4:19

Follow King Solomon's prescription for making a good boy (Proverbs 23:14) and you will make a good cake.

Bake in a loaf pan for 1½ hours. Cool.

LIAM, 10, TRAFALGAR, OAKVILLE, ONT.

Answers:
- Judges 5:25 = butter
- Jeremiah 6:20 = sugar
- Jeremiah 17:11 = eggs
- 1 Kings 4:22 = flour
- 1 Samuel 30:12 = raisins
- Nahum 3:12 = figs
- Numbers 17:8 = almonds
- 1 Samuel 14:25 = honey
- 2 Chronicles 9:9 = spices (cinnamon, clove, nutmeg)
- Leviticus 2:13 = salt
- Amos 4:5 = baking powder
- Judges 4:19 = milk
- Proverbs 23:14 = beat well

Donna Jean MacKinnon is a freelance writer. She originally wrote this for the Record's *blog, Recipes and Memories. You can find another fruitcake recipe on the blog by searching for "Gala Christmas Fruitcake."*

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EDUCATION

Faith and the University

A conference explores the state of theological studies. By Alex MacLeod

When I was a teenager, someone in my congregation gave me a dire warning about university. He made claws with his fingers and got a nasty look on his face. "They're wolves," he said. "And they will rip you apart. They'll tear the Christian faith right out of you."

The University of Toronto didn't seem all that scary to me. And I wasn't sure what to make of this man's histrionics during coffee hour. But then again, at that time, I was blissfully unaware—some would say, in the dark—about a lot of church history.

In the medieval period, Western universities formed at Christian initiative and in happy tandem with the church. That has changed over the last 100 or so years, during which Harvard University's motto went from *Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae*, meaning "Truth for Christ and the Church," to simply *Veritas*.

In September, Presbyterian College, Montreal, hosted an international conference, Christian ›

Creative conflict is an essential ingredient if the university is to fulfill its proper function

Faith and the University, to explore how "in the twentieth century, the traditional relationship between church and university, faith and reason, came under severe strain."

Over 150 scholars, pastors, graduate students and campus ministers from a dozen different countries gathered to hear lectures related to religion and the university, as well as to consider the legacy of W. Stanford Reid, an outstanding Canadian Presbyterian intellectual, on the centenary of his birth. Reid was a historian at McGill and the University of Guelph who exemplified a disciplined Christian intelligence which held fast to the uniqueness and truth of Jesus Christ in the mainstream academy, while at the same time repudiating the separatism of the fundamentalist movement.

There may be a popular impression that religion and intellectual inquiry are normally at odds. David Bebbington of Stirling University, Scotland, suggested that over the past 40 years, various scholars have increasingly come to accept the evidence which points to religion as a central force in modern history. No longer is church history treated as a separate topic in a marginalized divinity faculty; you're likely to find it fully-funded and embraced by trendy postmodern Ph.D.-seekers in the school of graduate studies.

Bebbington pointed to feminism and gender history as having generated a greater focus on women in history, which has recently allowed the story of religion, often practiced by women, to be told more fully. In addition, the emergence of postmodern history has undermined the modernist suspicion of religion as a mask for economic and other motivations and brought the study of ideas back to the main stage with a new attention to culture.

Mark Noll, University of Notre Dame, has perhaps done more than any other North American scholar this century to restore academic respectability to the study of religion and to encourage emerging scholars, Christian and otherwise, to take religion seriously.

In his lecture, Noll noted that Canada stands apart from the United States in its relative lack of controversy about biblical scholarship, evolution, and the larger issue of faith versus reason. In America, many denominations split and the university was demonized in some conservative Christian circles, but the Canadian church has offered more room for Christian university scholarship. In addition, Noll claimed that Canadian Protestants of all stripes, unlike their American counterparts, generally found it possible to accept evolution and higher criticism while maintaining faith in the Bible.

Prof. Margaret Somerville, University of McGill Law School, spoke on academic freedom. If the university is a place where divisive ideas should be hashed out for the benefit of society, she asked, how do we balance comfort and conflict? Creative conflict is an essential ingredient if the university is to fulfill its proper function. She illustrated the dilemma with reference to the abortion debate and the freedom of expression of pro-life students on campus in the face of their pro-choice opponents, some of whom have said that a "right to abortion" is not even debatable.

Somerville suggested that a facade of tolerance can mask a deeper intolerance which then threatens to undermine freedom. Political intolerance often operates through fear. Somerville gave a personal example, explaining that she is against same-sex marriage but is strongly in favour of full rights and protections for civil partnerships between same-sex couples. She described how her opposition to same-sex marriage has more often led to her vilification in the academy rather than creating an opening for conflict and constructive debate. She says she has colleagues who fear similar treatment.

Stanford Reid would have appreciated Somerville's contrarian spirit. As Prof. A. Donald MacLeod of Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, pointed out in his lecture, Reid was a gadfly who liked to challenge the complacency of both church and college. Most of all, Reid displayed a commitment to academic excellence and an unwillingness to leave his Christian faith at the door. (MacLeod is Reid's biographer and also my father.)

Reid would have told any Christian heading off to university to not be afraid of academic inquiry but to receive it as a calling and a privilege from the Lord. As a good Calvinist, he would have maintained God's sovereignty over every square inch of university life. He would also have said don't be naive about the challenges, but get involved in a local church and, most of all, remember your roots, who you are in Jesus Christ. And then he would have continued with his vocation, telling anyone who was too quick to accommodate to the world or too eager to hide from it where to go.

Rev. Alex MacLeod is minister at Kortright, Guelph, Ont.

NELLEKE CALDER, ST. JAMES, HANWELL, N.B.

MEDITATION

On Boundaries

God grant me the serenity. By Nancy Beattie

When we are empty, there is nothing to give. Sometimes, from that empty state, we give anyway. This can lead to renewed energy in the short term: It's refreshing to take our eyes off ourselves. After all, isn't our purpose to serve?

The problem arises when giving from an empty state becomes a way of life. At this point it's no longer a gift but a sacrifice. We need the ability to say, "no." If we are out of practice, or if we never learned to say it to begin with, guilt becomes the motivator. Guilt keeps us in a depleted state where we end up looking outward for purpose and fulfilment. Establishing (or re-establishing) appropriate boundaries helps us to recognize our responsibilities and allows us to let go of what is outside our control.

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Once our boundaries are clarified and we begin to say "no," the next thing to do is stand fast. Guilt will grow into a fearsome bully. At that point, the best defense is to sing the most profound song ever written: "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

He does love you. Know it in your heart. He loves you.

Surround yourself with people who remind you of this. Lean on them. Ask for support. Grieve whatever you need to. Letting go is hard. Taking responsibility is, too. But once you begin putting your energy in the right place, a miracle happens.

The boundaries you've established become the guardians of your heart—guardians that protect a sacred space, a space from which life begins to flow.

And a space into which a saviour is born.

Nancy Beattie is a member of Briarwood, Beaconsfield, Que.

BE CHURCH

A Good Social Network

The Golden Age Acadamy serves Taiwanese seniors in Vancouver. By Ruth Chueh

CHARLOTTE OCON, 9, ST. LUKE'S, OSHAWA, ONT.

The 18th fall term of ministry to Taiwanese seniors began in September at Vancouver Taiwanese Presbyterian.

Golden Age Academy has been the gathering place for Taiwanese seniors in the Metro Vancouver area since 1996, when Rev. Dr. Chinchai Wang, minister of VTPC at that time, noticed that the seniors were isolated. They complained that Canada was a beautiful country but they were blind, mute, deaf and crippled. Their eyes did not understand English and could not read the signs, their mouths could not speak English and they could not drive or get directions.

The Academy offers programs on Wednesdays and Fridays. The program provides exercise and music time at the beginning of each day followed by classes in current events, medicine and healthcare, knowing Canada, philosophy, and English. It has helped seniors get in touch with society, adjust to their new homes, learn about their new country, and also provides a good social network. They are able to share their experiences with each other and support one another. There are also outings and fieldtrips included as part of the programming for the Golden Age Academy. In this way, "In old age they still produce fruit; they are always green and full of sap" (Psalm 92:14).

For many Taiwanese seniors, coming to Golden Age Academy is the first time they set foot in a church. Some have even said, "I am a Buddhist. Am I allowed to be inside the church?" Through the program, they are invited to attend worship on special occasions: Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. They are also welcome to attend Bible studies. More than 200 people have attended Golden Age Academy, some for 17 years. Some seniors come to Golden Age Academy, then to worship services and Bible studies, and ultimately become members of the congregation. We praise the Lord for that.

Ruth Chueh is clerk of session at Vancouver Taiwanese Presbyterian Church.

HEATHER BOYD, ST. ANDREW'S, STREETSVILLE, ONT.

OPINION

Two Christmases

Don't confuse one with the other. By Jason MacEwen

There are two Christmases. One is the Christian Christmas and the other is the secular Christmas. This winter festival still carries the Christmas name, and, for nostalgic reasons, still holds to many traditions. This is the tricky part for Christians. It looks a lot like Christmas, it sounds a lot like Christmas, it has the Christmas name, and has a core spirit that is good and righteous. Throw in the mass media hype and marketing, and we can see how a good Christian might find himself forgetting the Christian meaning and Spirit of Christmas. The secular Christmas is joyful and well intentioned, and does embrace many Christian values. It does not want to be "superficial" and is constantly searching for the "true meaning of Christmas."

So what's the problem? I am not saying that we should not participate. Go ahead ... but don't confuse ›

the two Christmases.

The winter solstice was celebrated long before Christ's birth. For instance, Roman pagans celebrated the holiday of Saturnalia, a week-long period of lawlessness celebrated between December 17 and 25. During this period, Roman courts were closed; therefore, no justice could be administered. Gladiators fought to the death and in some areas the festival began when Roman authorities chose "an enemy of the Roman people" to represent the "Lord of Misrule." The victim would be forced to indulge in food and other physical pleasures throughout the week. At the festival's conclusion, December 25, Roman authorities believed they were destroying the forces of darkness by murdering this person. In addition to human sacrifice, there was widespread misbehaviour: intoxication, going from house to house while singing naked, sexual license, and consuming human-shaped biscuits (gingerbread men?).

MAYA MACLACHLAN, 5, KNOX, OAKVILLE, ONT.

In the fourth century, after Constantine declared Christianity the state religion, it is believed that in an attempt to convert the pagans, the Romans replaced the Saturnalia winter festival with Christmas, and designated December 25th Christmas Day. Stephen Nissenbaum, professor of history at the University of Massachusetts, writes, "In return for ensuring massive observance of the anniversary of the Saviour's birth by assigning it to this resonant date, the Church for its part tacitly agreed to allow the holiday to be celebrated more or less the way it had always been." The earliest Christmas holidays were celebrated with drinking, sexual indulgence and singing naked in the streets. Many of the things we think to be purely Christmas traditions actually have pagan origins—evergreen trees were symbols of hope and life in the midst of winter and gift-giving is from Saturnalia. Puritans in Europe in the 17th century tried to purge Christmas of these pagan rituals and even tried to cancel Christmas. (Bah Humbug!)

So this problem has been going on for almost 2,000 years. Christians of the day had trouble not getting caught up in the old traditions of the Saturn festival and they carried some of those traditions over, just as we have trouble not getting caught up in the hustle and bustle of the modern secular Christmas experience.

At this time of year we often watch Christmas specials and movies—most of which have a plot surrounding the discovery of the "true meaning of Christmas." These programs rarely approach Christmas from a religious perspective and assign instead some moral or ethical truth. Ultimately, I believe that the moral assumptions at the heart of the modern winter festival are rooted in the Way, the Truth, and the Life, so this "true meaning" often speaks to the notions of love, compassion, forgiveness and generosity, peace on earth and good will. These are all beautiful, powerful and sincere values, and it's great to centre a festival on them. By doing so, we reinforce their importance, and likely carry an emboldened sense of these values into the new year. This is wonderful and worth celebrating. However, from a Christian point of view, the real meaning of Christmas goes infinitely deeper and should bring us even more hope, joy and reason to celebrate.

Christians must never forget that the true meaning of Christmas is found in the birth of a child in the middle of nowhere, to simple parents on their way to be counted, and that this child reveals to us God's righteousness, God's hope, God's plan and God's promise—not for a day, a week, or a season, but for eternity and for all.

Jason MacEwen is a member at Gloucester, Ottawa.

PLANNED GIVING

20th Anniversary Of Gift Annuities for the Presbyterian Church in Canada

Would you like to leave a gift to the church but are concerned that you might outlive your wealth? A charitable gift annuity might be the solution to your dilemma. Gift annuities are a way by which you can give a significant gift to your local congregation or any ministry within the PCC and in return receive guaranteed annual income (most or all of that income tax-free) for the rest of your life. Gift annuities are designed for people sixty years old and older who would like to leave a gift to the church after they pass away but also need to receive steady income during their lifetimes.

The year 2013 marks the 20th anniversary for the charitable gift annuity program in the PCC. The very first annuitants were a married couple, Thomas and Ruth, who acquired a joint gift annuity on March 23, 1993. In exchange for their undesignated gift of $2,000 for The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the couple received $168 in annual income (8.4% rate of return), which was 100% tax-free and guaranteed for the rest of their lives. After Thomas passed away, Ruth continued to receive annual payments until her death in 2008, at which time the PCC received the $965 remaining in their annuity account.

Since that small beginning in 1993, the gift annuity program has continued to grow through the generosity of many other Presbyterians like Thomas and Ruth who have discovered the benefits of gift annuities for both themselves and the church. In the last eight years nearly $800,000 has been realized through the legacy of deceased annuitants whose gifts provided additional funding to local congregations, *Presbyterians Sharing*, and a variety of other ministries of the church, including PWS&D, synod camps, theological colleges, and Evangel Hall. In our 20th anniversary year, we also celebrate the 162 Presbyterians who presently have gift annuities totaling over $2.65 million. Their generosity and foresight will help sustain vital ministries of the Presbyterian Church for decades to come.

"Discover the benefits of gift annuities for both you and the church."

Gift Annuities are Safe

Gift annuities are not only a simple way to make a gift to the church, they are also a safe investment. The PCC is a member in good standing of the Canadian Charitable Annuity Association. The CCAA was established in 1996 to set standards and provide support and guidance for charities that offer charitable gift annuities to ensure that the financial security of those who acquire gift annuities is protected. The PCC adheres to the standards and guidelines set by the CCAA and the Canada Revenue Agency. The money contributed by our annuitants is invested in the PCC's Consolidated Fund, a professionally managed balanced portfolio of blue chip equities and bonds, totaling over $125 million in assets. Each year the PCC has an actuarial financial review to ensure that we can fulfill all our obligations for the lifetime of all our annuitants.

An Elder's Legacy

Dr. Ronald Bremner was a dermatologist in Saskatoon, where he was a long-serving elder and Sunday School teacher at St. Andrew's Church. In 1999, he acquired a single-life gift annuity for $30,000, which he designated for the international development and relief work of Presbyterian World Service & Development. In return for his gift, Ron received:

- A one-time tax receipt of $7,083;
- Monthly payments of $165.17 (100% tax free) for the rest of his life, totaling $24,535;
- And $24,880 was left in his annuity account which was immediately disbursed to PWS&D after he passed away in October of 2011.

To read more about Dr. Bremner's legacy, check out his story in the Summer 2012 issue of the ProVisionaries Magazine at presbyterian.ca/newsletters.

"I love my church. Financially, a gift annuity is good for me and for my church. My son is a financial advisor, and now he is pleased that I have acquired an annuity."

Felicity Alexander, PCC Annuitant

Quick Facts

- Charitable gift annuities have been offered by Canadian charities since the early 1900s.
- Gift annuities are a combination of a charitable gift and an annuity. The portion that is deemed a gift is eligible for a one-time tax receipt.
- Gift annuities are simple and worry free. Guaranteed payments are deposited directly into your bank account.
- Gift annuity rates are based on your age, gender and the current bond rate. The older you are the higher the annuity rate and the greater the tax benefits.
- You can designate any ministry or ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada you choose to be the beneficiary/ies of your gift annuity (e.g. a congregation, *Presbyterians Sharing*, a Mission Priority Fund, etc.). Many annuitants apportion their gift to two or more ministries of the church.
- Gift annuities are given outside your estate, so there are no probate fees attached to the gift and no delay while settling your estate.
- You can acquire either a single life annuity (which provides life-long income for you alone) or a joint life annuity (which provides annual income for as long as either you or your spouse/sibling are alive).

How One Presbyterian Created His Own "Do It Yourself" Pension Plan Using Gift Annuities

"Annuities may be the best retirement product that hardly anyone buys. Like defined benefit pensions, they provide guaranteed income for as long as you live. Just about every expert who has studied annuities believes they are the most effective safeguard against 'longevity risk,' or the possibility of outliving your wealth." So writes David Aston in his article entitled, "Your DIY Pension Plan," featured in the Sept/Oct 2013 issue of *MoneySense magazine*.

Jim Russell doesn't need to be convinced of the value of annuities. A member of St. Mark's Presbyterian Church in Don Mills, Ontario, Jim immigrated to Canada from Ireland in 1947 because of the opportunities offered here. "I came to Canada with nothing," Jim said. "In fact, I owed my sister $300! Through the doors that have opened to me here, I have been able to build a very comfortable life for me and my family."

Originally a professional dance instructor, Jim decided to shift his career into the financial services industry and became an insurance consultant. Through his many years in the industry, Jim became very familiar with annuities and pension and benefits solutions for large companies.

After Jim retired, he decided he would apply the knowledge he had gleaned from his consulting work to develop a pension plan for his wife, Phyllis. Phyllis had never worked outside the home so she had no company pension plan or CPP to provide an income stream. "I wanted to protect my wife's financial security if I should predecease her," Jim said. "I also wanted to leave a gift for the charitable work we have supported throughout our lives."

Jim's solution was to acquire a number of joint gift annuities that would provide a guaranteed income stream as long as they live and a way to give back to the country that had offered him so much. In return for the gift annuity Jim acquired through the PCC, he received a one-time charitable donation tax receipt as well as guaranteed annual income 100% tax-free for as long as he or Phyllis are alive. He used stocks that had appreciated in value to fund the annuity, thus eliminating the capital gains tax for the tax-receiptable portion of his gift.*

Jim has had both hips replaced, so he is no longer strutting his stuff on the dance floor; but if he could, he would be dancing a jig at the benefits he has experienced through gift annuities–the gifts that keep on giving and giving, providing financial security for him and his wife as long as they live and legacy gifts for the country and church he loves.

*Gifts of publicly traded securities that have appreciated in value are a tax-smart way to make a charitable gift. When you sell a stock privately, 50% of the capital gains are subject to taxation. But if you give that same stock directly to the church as a gift-in-kind, all capital gains taxes are eliminated, plus you receive a donation tax receipt for the full market value of the securities. Since 2006, when the federal government eliminated capital gains tax on donated securities, the PCC has received over 350 gifts of stock valued at nearly $4.5 million! More than 75% of those gifts funded projects in local congregations; the rest went to *Presbyterians Sharing*, PWS&D, WMS/AMS and other ministries within the church. Contact Sheryl Sutton in the Planned Giving Office to learn how simple it is to transform a stock or mutual fund you own into vitally needed ministries across the church.

Sample Gift Annuity Quotes

(Special note: The rates below were accurate as of the time of printing. Annuity rates vary and are subject to change. Contact the Planned Giving Office for an up-to-date quote based on your age, gender and current bond rates.)

Single Life Gift Annuity Quotes Based on a $20,000 Contribution

Age	Gender	Annuity rate	Annual payment and tax-free portion	Immediate one-time donation tax receipt
70	male	4.87%	$974.70 (100% tax free)	$7,136.30
70	female	4.54%	$908.20 (97% tax free)	$6,889.12
75	male	5.52%	$1,103.90 (100% tax free)	$7,517.80
75	female	5.10%	$1,020.30 (100% tax free)	$7,378.99
80	male	6.41%	$1,282.50 (100% tax free)	$7,811.57
80	female	5.92%	$1,183.70 (100% tax free)	$7,714.72

Joint Life Gift Annuity Quotes Based on a $50,000 Contribution

Spouses (both of whom are the same age)	Annuity rate	Annual payment and tax-free portion	Immediate one-time donation tax receipt
75	4.54%	$2,270.50 (96% tax free)	$18,492.90
80	5.11%	$2,555.50 (100% tax free)	$19,313.88

Join the Celebration!

Interested in making a gift to The Presbyterian Church in Canada while earning guaranteed annual income that's mostly or all tax-free? Call Sheryl Sutton in the Planned Giving Office and get a free, no obligation gift annuity quote. Become one of the hundreds of Presbyterians who have discovered the benefits of gift annuities for both them and the church.

www.presbyterian.ca/pg

The Planned Giving Office

1-800-619-7301 ext. 265

plannedgiving@presbyterian.ca

The information in this newsletter does not constitue legal or professional advice and should not be substituted for appropriate professional advice. The Presbyterian Church in Canada encourages you to seek professional legal and financial advice before deciding on a course of action.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada

PWS&D IS THE DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

ABRIDGED VERSION

PWSDevelopments

The quarterly newsletter for Presbyterian World Service & Development • 2013 Edition, Issue 4

Presbyterians Respond to the Millions Suffering from

SYRIA'S HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

THE WAR IN SYRIA IS ONE OF THE LARGEST humanitarian disasters of the last 20 years. Over 100,000 people have been killed and more than 6.8 million people displaced because of the intensifying violence within the country, according to reports from the United Nations.

"They burned our houses and we left carrying nothing—no money, no food, no clothing. We only had the things that we were wearing, that's all," said one Syrian refugee, describing his family's dramatic escape from the conflict, to Jordan where they have found refuge.

His story is all too common.

Every day, thousands of Syrians pour across the borders into neighbouring Jordan and Lebanon. As of September, there are over two million Syrian refugees. Astoundingly, while it took two years to reach one million refugees, the number of refugees fleeing Syria has doubled in the last six months – over 700,000 are in Lebanon and over 500,000 are in Jordan. Nearly 78 per cent of these refugees are women and children.

Uncertain Future for Refugees

In Jordan, it is estimated that about 70 per cent of Syrian refugees are living outside official refugee camps. Many are reluctant to register with the United Nations for fear that they will be persecuted if the Assad government prevails, but not registering also means they are unable to live in camps. Instead, they wait months to receive international assistance.

In Lebanon, the government has expressly forbidden the establishment of refugee camps, fearing that asylum seekers may stay in the country permanently. This leaves Syrian refugees seeking accommodation wherever they can—apartments, garages and even tool sheds—pooling their resources with two or three other families.

Ali Hussein and Khadide Namouk fled to Lebanon after their home near Damascus was bombed. With their six children, they found shelter in an apartment, which they share with six other families. Grateful for a place to live, Khadide says they are struggling to find work to buy food and support their family.

For Syria's refugee families, the future is uncertain. They have fled for their lives with no way of knowing how or when the conflict will end, or if they will ever be able to return home.

Shining Christ's Light on Syria

"For over 65 years our church has responded to crises in a broken world. Today, it seems no place in the world is as broken as Syria," says PWS&D director, Ken Kim. ▶

›

WITH FILES FROM CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK.
PHOTOS BY PAUL JEFFREY, ACT ALLIANCE

With the world watching the horror unfold in Syria, PWS&D is responding with our partners, through the ACT Alliance and Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB), to support people in the region who are in desperate need.

"I often hear from Presbyterians regarding the work PWS&D does throughout the world. Some ask how we are able to work in 'dangerous' places, or in the aftermath of unprecedented disasters," continues Kim. "But I have been surprised by the deafening silence surrounding the humanitarian disaster in Syria. Generosity is at the heart of our church. We are called to provide Christ's light of love and hope to those suffering in the worst of conditions."

Working with members of CFGB, Presbyterian World Service & Development is part of a $5.2 million response that is providing food assistance to 55,000 people inside Syria and to refugees in Lebanon and Jordan. Syrians affected by the conflict are receiving basic food items as well as food vouchers, which give refugees the freedom to purchase food from local stores.

With members of the ACT Alliance, PWS&D is working to ensure those affected by the conflict have shelter and clothing and that children living in refugee camps receive psychosocial and educational support.

"We don't claim to have the answers to all the ills of our world, or in Syria alone. However, as Christ calls us, we must respond together as a community of believers."

The situation demands a committed response in order to save lives. Presbyterian World Service & Development and our partners need your help to bring about change in the lives of everyone affected by this violent conflict. Please make a donation today. ■

Canadian Foodgrains Bank
A Christian Response to Hunger

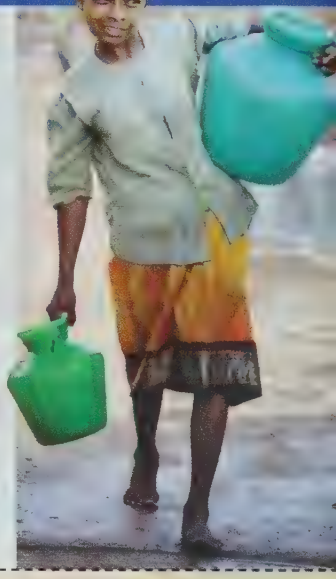
The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is made up of 15 church-based agencies that work together to respond to hunger around the world and to improve the ability of communities to grow their own food. CFBG programs are undertaken with support from the Canadian Government.

actalliance

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:
PWS&D SUNDAY IS FEBRUARY 2, 2014

PWS&D SUNDAY



PWS&D Sunday is a time for you and your congregation to remember the work of our church in supporting vulnerable people through programs in international development and emergency relief. Every year, PWS&D produces a variety of resources to use during PWS&D Sunday, including a new worship resource, bulletin covers and offering envelopes. Speakers are also available to share the work of PWS&D with your congregation.

A GIFT OF HOPE

Presbyterian World Service & Development

The development and relief agency of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

For more information or to make a donation contact:

Presbyterian World Service & Development
50 Wynford Drive,
Toronto, Ont. M3C 1J7

1-800-619-7301 ext. 291
pwsd@presbyterian.ca

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Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community

QUINTON TRACEY, 12, ST. ANDREW'S, STREETSVILLE, ONT.

COMMUNITY

Coming Together

The AMS's annual gathering is good for the soul.

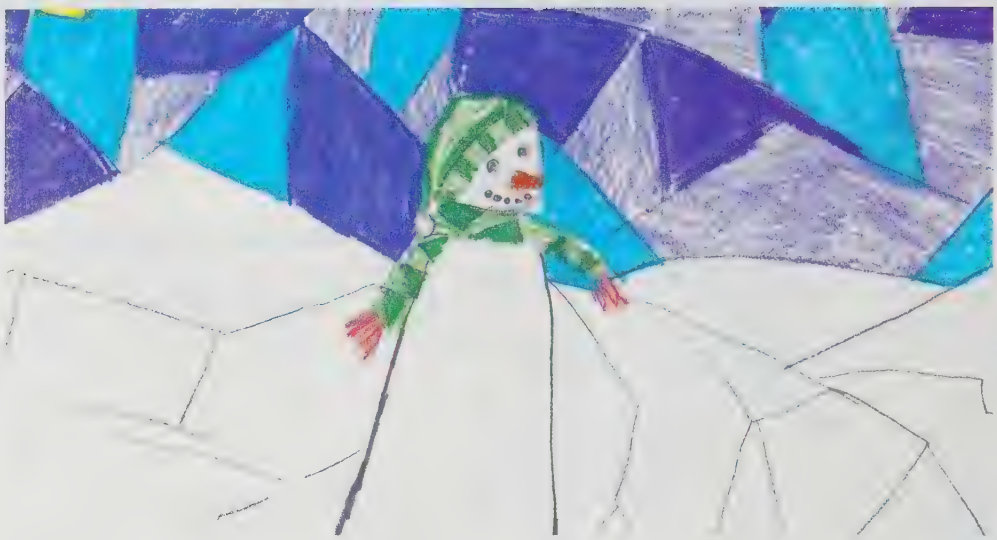
By Amy MacLachlan

An annual meeting of the Atlantic Mission Society is kind of how I imagine a kitchen party in a brightly-coloured cottage on the shores of St. John's, with its singing and dancing and instrument-playing around the fireplace or kitchen stove. For these AMS gatherings aren't merely to conduct business, but are reunions of extended family—women and men from across the east coast coming together to share, to sing, to laugh, to learn, to pray, to eat and to enjoy each other's company.

And isn't that what any church gathering should be?

This year's 137th meeting in September was actually on the island of Prince Edward, not in Newfoundland. And yes, there was business to be done—like thanking outgoing president, ›

COMMUNITY, continued



PEYTON DRYNAN, 11, ST. ANDREW'S, STREETSVILLE, ONT.

Jennifer Whitfield after three years of service and installing Bonnie Langille of River John, N.S., for the next three; and adopting a streamlined vision that highlights a dedication to the work of the denomination as a whole ("The purpose of the Society is to glorify God and support ... mission endeavours through the Presbyterian Church in Canada.")—noting that non-PCC projects should be chosen in light of whether or not they would be supported by the Presbyterian Church.

But it was the coming together—the community, the communion—of 125 faithful that was the true thrust of the meeting. It helped me understand the oft-repeated argument against moving to biennial General Assemblies—that the coming together of church folk every year, particularly for those in remote congregations or presbyteries, is good for the soul.

It also lends support to Rev. David Webber's argument—which he spoke about during his address on the first evening of the meeting—for a return to house churches (like those he pastors in the remote Cariboo-Chilcotin region of B.C.). Churches that aren't dependent upon ordained clergy, but where people meet in homes and nurture both body and soul through food, through music, through studying the gospel. Churches where everyone knows everyone else's name, and the names of their children, and where they work and what they struggle with. Churches that strive, intimately, to be Christ in the world. To respond to their unique situation. To invite others to join.

"Small groups are where people can relate to one another in bonds of community. Communities, where the level of consciousness is at a peak, fueling the intentions that lead to the praying, sharing, reflecting, evangelizing and liberating works of the ministry of Christ," said Webber.

At the heart of this argument, for me, is the creation and nurturing of community—Christ's community. And the stories that were shared by others at the meeting supported this idea.

Rev. Webber's wife, Linda told personal tales of visiting the house churches that make up their ministry. Honest stories of real-life relationships, no matter how messy. Rev. Dr. Paul McLean talked about his time in Taiwan, where he first went as a missionary in 1983, and along with a dedicated and deeply connected team of 20 ("translation is teamwork," said McLean), joyfully unveiled a new Bible translation in the indigenous Hakka language in 2012—a project that was 26 years in the making. Dr. McLean's wife, Mary Beth shared remembrances of giving birth in Taiwan and the local customs practiced after childbirth.

All of these stories related the need, the desire, the richness and reward of community.

There was also an all-out banquet in a hall decorated with white twinkling lights, featuring a dinner that ended with massive pieces of lemon pie topped with mile-high meringue, and entertainment that varied from highland dancing to intergenerational singing to comedy skits. The offering was taken amidst dancing and music-playing, complete with feather boas and tiny toy instruments. And there was a packed-house Sunday worship at the beautiful new Summerside Presbyterian Church.

Several offerings were taken over the weekend, with more than $1,700 raised and divided equally among the Webbers' and the McLeans' ministries, as well as P.E.I.'s Camp Keir.

The meeting's theme was, "Blessed to be a blessing," and the AMS is certainly that. They are a small yet vibrant group, fiercely committed to supporting the church's missionaries and mission projects overseas; learning about issues in Canada and around the world through the mission studies produced by the national church; nurturing youth, children, and students through bursaries to camps and seminary students; and looking for local projects they can support with both their time and money.

This is Christ's community. A blessing indeed.

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *senior writer. She attends Knox, Oakville, Ont.*

FAY STRANG, ST. ANDREW'S, WARKWORTH, ONT.

REVIEW

Historical Morsels

AMS book recalls missions past. By Andy den Otter

The second volume of *Profiles in Mission* is a smorgasbord of historical morsels picked from the history of the Atlantic Mission Society and its predecessors. Not a mere continuation from the first volume, it offers new and tasty bits of information from biographies, eulogies, poems, excerpts from *The Presbyterian Message*, letters from missionaries and other overseas workers, as well as reflections from past and present members of the AMS.

Founded in October 1876 as the Halifax ›

REVIEW, continued

FAY STRANG, ST. ANDREW'S, WARKWORTH, ONT.

Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, this organization became the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in 1885, and the Woman's Foreign and Home Missionary Society in 1905. Ten years later, the fellowship signalled its solidarity, but not its organizational unity, with the Woman's Missionary Society (Western Division) by renaming itself the Woman's Missionary Society (Eastern Division). While the former was a creation of the General Assembly, the latter had its origin in a relationship with the Foreign Mission Board (Eastern Division) and subsequently saw itself as a supporter of the General Board of Missions. In 1987, after prolonged and heated debate, the Eastern Division re-branded itself as inclusive of both genders and called itself the Atlantic Mission Society.

The strength of *Profiles in Mission* is the variety—even if eclectic—of its source materials. The first unit, for example, reproduces original documents on the pioneer mission in Trinidad including short biographies of Rev. John and Sarah Morton, a modern reflection on the mission in Trinidad, a report by the first teacher, an excerpt from a letter written some 20 years after the mission was founded, a 1921 article about the mission, and a biography of a daughter of the Mortons, who became president of the WMS. Subsequent sections proffer similar collections on mission in the Hebrides (today's Vanuatu), British Guiana (today's Guyana), and Korea, detailing the work of the missionaries, deaconesses, doctors and nurses who answered the Great Commission's call.

Also of great value are lesser-known pieces on the union of 1925. When most of the staff of *The Message* moved to the United Church, loyalists revived their magazine as *The Presbyterian Message*. Similarly, a core of the eastern division retained its ties to the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Many nuggets of information also provide insight into the role of women in the church. Not surprisingly, several letters and articles lament the fact that women were shut out of church offices, leaving them to teach Sunday school and support missions. More subtle is a note from Prince Edward Island's Knox Auxiliary. After having travelled by horse and buggy for meetings in a lady's home, "it was not uncommon," one member observed, "for the man of the house to take part by leading in prayer." Also telling is how long the AMS referred to women by their husband's name rather than their own first names.

What emerges from this wealth of raw information is the crucial role women played in keeping Christ's Great Commission on the agendas of the men who ruled the church. Moreover, *Profiles in Mission* illustrates the absolutely essential support church women gave to those men and women who ventured overseas for the same great purpose.

Andy den Otter is professor emeritus in the Department of History at Memorial University, St. John's. He co-authored with Kim Arnold, Preserving Your Heritage: Writing a Congregational History and Creating an Archives. *He is also the longtime moderator of the Presbytery of Newfoundland and, currently, of the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces.*

THE CREW SETS UP WALLS FOR A NEW HOME.

MISSION

Levelled and Trowelled

Easter in Mexico to build homes.

By Len Wolstenholme and Randy Jaggard

Every year since 2005, to mark the 100th anniversary of Grace, Calgary, a group of us has driven down to Mexico to build homes. The smallest group was 11, the largest counted 94; with children from age 11 to young-at-heart in their 70s. Grace and Westminster, Calgary, have partnered on this mission since 2006; with involvement of folks from St. Andrew's, Calgary, and St. Andrew's, Lethbridge, along with Anglican, Baptist and Roman Catholic friends. It's been one of our most effective intergenerational and ›

MISSION, continued

inter-congregational activities. For every 15 of us, we can build a home—putting a solid, dry roof over a family in need. Over the years we have built homes for more than 20 families.

This year, three 15-passenger vans with trailers hauling tools, camping gear and luggage left for the 2,700-kilometre drive to Tijuana, Mexico, on March 22. It was filled with great conversations, new friends made, old friendship deepened.

THE MISSION TEAM WITH A RECIPIENT FAMILY.

Three days later we were at the offices of Amor Ministries in San Diego, California. Established 30 years ago to help address the acute shortage of basic housing in northern Mexico, Amor now has pastors and community workers on the ground in the most needy communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. A notable exception is Ciudad Juarez, which has become a drug war battleground for the last few years and is unsafe for mission teams. Through volunteer teams like ours, Amor has facilitated the building of over 20,000 homes, an average of almost 700 each year. Groups come from all over Canada and the U.S., and some have even come from the U.K. and South Africa.

We cross into Mexico and settle in at the Amor campsite at a farm on the outskirts of Tijuana. The team enjoys a great dinner prepared by La Concina, a catering team of local pastors' wives and community workers, followed by stories and songs around the campfire.

March 25, 6:30 a.m.: Breakfast, devotional, into the vans and off to our build sites to meet the families and start work by 8:30 a.m. Each recipient family works with us to build their home. It's critical on the first day to get the concrete pad completed, a demanding and sweat-inducing task. The site has to be cleared and leveled, a form made for the concrete, cement and aggregate mixed by hand and poured into the form to be levelled and trowelled.

While some of the team focus on that, others are measuring, cutting and assembling lumber for the wall and roof sections. This work takes the whole day and must be done correctly for the project to continue.

At 5:30 p.m., a weary and dusty team piles back in the vans for the trip to the camp where lukewarm showers and a delicious dinner await. After that it's campfire time and most are dead to the world by 9:30.

March 26: Up at 6:30. Today we finish the wall and a roof section. The roof is sheathed with particleboard and covered with tarpaper and rolled asphalt shingle.

March 27 and 28: Each house receives a mesh of medium-gauge wire tightly secured with nails. Next a layer of tarpaper is stapled over the wire mesh. Then overlapping layers of chicken wire are stretched tight over the tarpaper (it's hard on the fingers; blisters are common). Two windows and the door are installed. Once that's all in place, the first coat of stucco is hand mixed and trowelled onto the walls, a messy but fun job as long as none is dropped on you from above! The recipient family receives the keys to their new home, along with the handmade quilts and other gifts we've brought for them.

The next day we start our travel back home. Ten days, 5,400 kilometres, and three families who have received dry, secure homes, and wonderful friendships and memories made. Thanks be to God!

Len Wolstenholme is an elder at Grace, Calgary, and Randy Jaggard is an elder at Westminster, Calgary.

Elders' Institute, St. Andrew's Hall
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WILLIAM PERRY, 10, ST. ANDREW'S, SCARBOROUGH, AND FIRST, PENETANGUISHENE, ONT.
"STAR WARS CHRISTMAS"

GABRIELLE MUTANGA, 3, ST. ANDREW'S, STREETSVILLE, ONT.

This year's art submissions were really incredible—from a cute little scribble from a two-year-old to a painting from a 92-year-old! Talk about variety. I tried to fit as many pieces into the issue as possible, and believe me, it wasn't easy to edit them down. Everyone deserves a special "thank you" for your creativity, enthusiasm and for the time each and every artist put into their piece.

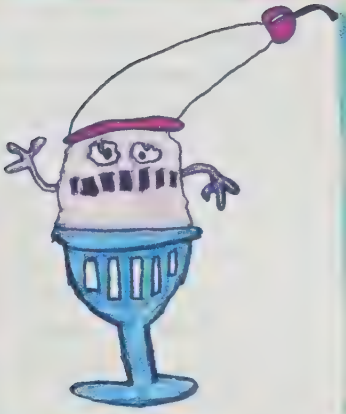
There was one creation that made me, and my family, laugh out loud. My eldest son Alex, who is five and suddenly obsessed simultaneously with both Lego and *Star Wars*, was ecstatic upon seeing this submission from William Perry, age 10. It's a Christmas choir scene created out of Star Wars lego, complete with Storm Trooper singers and Yoda as the conductor! Top points for creativity, William.

But there was one piece that really moved me, and that is the one that graces this year's cover. It's titled, No Room at the Inn, from a reader down south, John Stuart, from Erin Presbyterian in Knoxville, Tennessee. It is both dramatic and calm, striking and magical. Congratulations, John!

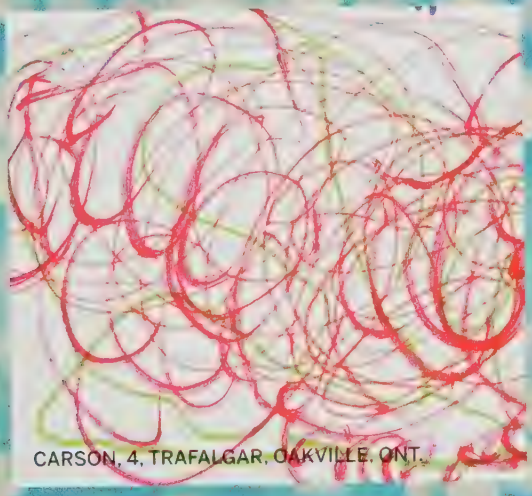
I wish all of you a joyful, peaceful and meaningful Christmas.

Caroline

Caroline Bishop is the Record's *art director.*



WILLIAM, 9, ST. JAMES, FOREST, ONT.



CARSON, 4, TRAFALGAR, OAKVILLE, ONT.

ROLAND DE VRIES, KENSINGTON, MONTREAL

KRISTIN ST. CYR, DAYSPRING, EDMONTON

Christmas Alone

Finding warmth during a cold season. By Bonnie Thomson

It was my first Christmas alone and my internal landscape was as bleak as leafless trees against a grey sky. There was no warmth or comfort that year.

The one thin thread that held me together was knowing that God was there—even though I couldn't feel God, had no sense of being loved, no assurance at all of divine presence or care.

There was just one place where the gossamer that was God holding me together thickened into something stronger. It happened every night at bedtime. Just before I turned out my light, I would open my Bible to the Psalms. Years of Bible study had taught me well that the psalmist understood loss in all its forms. I knew I would not have to read long before finding words that expressed the cries of my heart.

I cried because those people back at the church had the joy that I couldn't manage

"Day and night I have only tears for food ..."

"My heart is breaking when I remember how it used to be ..."

But I knew that as surely as I found words of grief, despair, fear and longing, I would also find words of comfort, encouragement and even hope.

"I will put my hope in God! I will praise Him again—my Saviour and my God!"

I couldn't face the happy fellowship of church those days, especially during the weeks leading up to Christmas. I didn't know what to say to people and often people didn't know what to say to me.

But on Christmas Eve, I decided to risk going to a service.

I arrived late, eluded greeters, slipped into a seat near the back and huddled there for the first part of the service.

I managed alright through the story-telling carols: *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear, The First Noel, While Shepherds Watched their Flocks*. But the one that did me in was *Joy to the World*. A trumpet was leading. The sound was so bright ... powerful ... exuberant! The sheer, bold joy of it broke my heart with both joy and sorrow.

As the singing swelled, my spirit leapt to the reality of new life and hope because of this baby born so long ago, who lived and died to show God's love to the less-than-whole—a category that definitely included me. I could feel the energy in the room, the moving of the Spirit.

But it was too much. I wasn't able to receive it in such intensity. Like my mother who wore sunglasses in the house after her eye surgery, I couldn't tolerate the strength of light present at that moment. It was exquisitely beautiful, but too painful.

Loneliness washed over me, then anger. My jaw ached as I tried to hold back tears. Then I let them flow. There was no stopping the sobs that shook my body. I left and headed to my car.

I cried then for the beauty of God-made-man, for the hope that sustains when there is nothing else. I cried for the sadness, for love lost, my life forever changed. I cried for my lack of strength and my lack of faith. I cried because those people back at the church had the joy that I couldn't manage. I cried for the pain that seemed beyond enduring. I cried because my loss was a filter that kept out the comfort of God.

I cried because in that church were people who still had all that I'd lost. And often they didn't seem to appreciate it. That made me angry.

But in the end I cried because I knew that the hope there was real and true and present. And I knew, in spite of the loss that filled my whole lens, one day I would feel it again.

AISLIN PERRY, 11, ST. ANDREW'S, SCARBOROUGH, AND FIRST, PENETANGUISHENE, ONT.

I remember years ago stepping outside the back door of an old, brick farmhouse. A storm had passed and the snowy yard lay bright in the silver light of a quarter moon.

The cold stillness was almost a sound, the silence an echo.

The drape of white made a mound of the daphne bush beside the gate. Pristine. Tidy. But that smooth orb contained an uncountable number of tiny snowflakes. How was it possible for those little bits of snow to cover a three-foot shrub? What kept them from falling between the dry, brown leaves onto the ground?

And then there was the sky. The Milky Way scattered brightness across the centre, a contrast to the deep black spaces between the stars on either side.

Did those same stars shine on the grains of sand in the desert where the wise men plodded along on their way to see Jesus? Did they gleam on blue and red of turbans, copper, brass and silver of the camels' harnesses and saddles?

Those stars, the same then as now. Long ago. Far away. But the same.

And beyond them is the mystery of God, who formed them, who knows them, who calls them by name.

How does earth fit into the scale of the universe? Is it the equivalent of one little snowflake, one grain of sand? And if the earth is one little snowflake, what are we? And how wondrous it is that He chose to become one of us—the Creator becoming microscopic in His own universe.

The stars sang when the earth was born. They must have been singing when Jesus was born. Back-up choir for the angels. They were likely still singing as the shepherds pelted down the path to Bethlehem, but their song was drowned out by the thud of feet on the hard earth and the gasps of men not used to running.

It was a long time ago that I stood outside that old farmhouse, when I looked at stars that winked through the deep darkness. I remember that just before the tingle in my fingers sent me back into the house, I heard them. Just for a moment, I heard the stars sing.

Bonnie Thomson is a freelance writer; she worships at Malvern, Scarborough, Ont.

Holy Awkwardness

Carolling across the threshold. By Judith Farris

Travelling Christmas carols!" my friend Faye announced. "I saw it in a movie once and I think our church should try it." I asked her what travelling carols are and she described a group of carollers with candles lit and faces aglow, singing their way through the neighbourhood. We would add carollers as we walked along. Those who heard the carols would slip into their coats, mittens and scarves, and join the chorus.

"Okay," I said. "Let's do it."

We planned a route and called our event, Carols on Kathleen Street. We wrote a flyer announcing the event for our neighbours and delivered them on the first Sunday of Advent—which was also the first real snowfall of the winter, thick flakes gathering on the once-green grass. The people of Kathleen Street have a Christmas tradition of tying big, red, velvety bows to the large trees that line the sidewalks, and the day of our flyer delivery happened to be the day the bows went up.

I submitted the makings of a Christmas card to our local copy store, with instructions for a Christmas greeting and text inviting people to join our Advent and Christmas worship services. For the front of the cards, I chose an image of the lovely stained glass nativity scene from our church sanctuary.

"This window is yours?" marvelled the copy store's graphic designer, who had at first glance assumed that the photo was a stock image. Yes, that window of the calm, holy family of Bethlehem is ours. It is ours to ponder as we gather to worship each Sunday, and it would be ours to share as we passed these greeting cards to our church's neighbours after carolling. For some people who lived near our church building, it would be the first time they had really seen this image, as the stained glass picture is difficult to see from the sidewalk. They, too may have been surprised by its quiet beauty.

Inside and out, our church is beautiful. Our staff and volunteers maintain a very well kept facility. When my grandparents came to town, even the church bathrooms impressed my Grandma. Not only are the bathrooms clean, they are cosy—right down to the baskets of paper towels on the counters and the little tables topped with flowers in the corners.

Our church building also has wonderful spaces for large groups of people to prepare and share food together. I've always thought of church hospitality as being like my Grandma's kitchen—warm, tidy and welcoming, a place where there is always enough room and enough food for one more at the table. Hearing Mark Buchanan discuss his book, *Your Church Is Too Safe* this past year complicated my view of hospitality in the church. Being ready to serve as a host to newcomers is important, but true hospitality also involves taking the risk of stepping out of the church building and becoming a guest. For Buchanan's congregation at the time, that meant stepping onto the nearby native reserve to get to know their neighbours in Duncan, B.C.

Rev. Roland De Vries of Kensington, Montreal, wrote a missional identity statement, his own attempt to think through ideas of what it means to be church today, ›

GETTY IMAGES

Christmas
Carols

and posted it on Facebook. He writes that seeking out "threshold spaces" is an important way for congregations to relate to their neighbourhoods. These are places where all the parties involved are on equal footing. He gives the example of Paul and Lydia, who, as recorded in Acts 16:11-15, meet on a neutral ground, a place of worship outside the city of Philippi. If either one was the host in this place "outside the gate by the river" it was Lydia, who worshipped God there regularly (Acts 16:13). Paul shares Christ with Lydia from his non-power position; he is on her turf. She goes on to insist on hosting Paul in her own home, making Paul, in De Vries' words, "doubly the guest."

De Vries writes: "The members and friends of congregations should make a habit of walking through their neighbourhood, praying for their neighbourhood, entering into conversation with those who live/work in the neighbourhood, and should become aware of the struggles, concerns, and joys of its neighbours." As an example, De Vries's congregation at Kensington has partnered since March of 2011 with a local community organization, Bienvenue à NDG. The church provides a meal for new immigrants to the neighbourhood, while the other organization co-ordinates the workshop. The joint effort is called *Les Saveurs du Monde*, Flavours of the World.

Understanding the somewhat abstract idea of a threshold space might begin by crossing the literal threshold of the church. At Camp Kintail's speaker series this year, David Csinos called this kind of risk-taking "holy awkwardness" for the sake of Jesus. We welcome the stranger by stepping out and being the stranger. In so doing, we model the generous love God showed by sending His son to be a stranger among us, to cross the threshold of heaven for our sake.

Which brings us to the threshold of our church building one crisp December evening last year. A group of 20-odd people from our church gathered in the hall, sang a song or two, and then crossed the threshold to stand on the sidewalk of a neighbourhood home, ring the bell and begin to sing. Our motley group, including elderly people, Sunday school children, and those in between, sang carols. Even members of our church choir participated, though the cold air wore out their voices for the next day's church service. We held flickery, battery-operated candles in our mittened hands and huddled together in the chilly air. Whether or not the door was opened to us, we offered our Christmas card to each home.

It was awkward. Some houses were darkened, their owners elsewhere. Some people were home but just didn't open their doors—either in spite of or because of the flyer promising our presence. Perhaps we should have highlighted in bold that we were not collecting money. Perhaps we should have picked a different night. Perhaps the era for door-to-door carolling has come to an end. At the majority of homes, no one came to the threshold.

We welcome the stranger by stepping out and being the stranger

Awkward, yes. But it was also magical. The songs carried beautifully in the cool evening air. Some families gathered at their front doors to listen, pajama-clad toddlers pressing their noses to the glass. One man shook his head in disbelief and took a cell phone video. "I never thought," he said, "I would ever hear carollers again." And, miracle of miracles, one family caught Faye's vision and joined in the carolling, even coming into the church hall to share Christmas cookies and hot apple cider with us as we chatted and warmed our chilly fingers and toes.

Months later, my husband, Allan and I were serving as chaplains for a week at Camp Kintail. On a balmy July evening, we gathered around the glen campfire with campers and staff to sing out the end of another full day. "Someone's gotta keep it on going," we sang. "There are so many folks who haven't heard. You can count on me 'cause I'm showing there are so many ways to spread the word." The warmth of the campfire and the camp song remain with us back in the city as winter nears again. Those folks who haven't heard may not happen into our building, but hopefully we can meet some of them at a threshold.

We plan to carol on Kathleen Street again this December. The most I hope for is, as we again step across the church threshold together, that Jesus himself will be present with us, making holy any awkwardness.

Judith Farris and her family worship at Paterson Memorial, Sarnia, Ont.

FROM THE MODERATOR

A Simple Joy

It comes from Christ the Lord. By David Sutherland

We are home from India now, with minds full of potent new images of life. One of those images is of a simple joy.

On your behalf we visited in and around Chennai, Delhi, Indore and the Jobat area. As moderator I received (again, on your behalf), the thanks and admiration of a grateful people. You have done and continue to do great work. We received thanks in the high office of the moderator of the Church of North India and in the humblest of villages, both urban and rural. There was a scene in one small village that I knew I would be bringing home to share.

As we entered I began thinking of ancient Bethlehem. Perhaps it was the animals all over this village tucked away on the Indian countryside. The people moved here from another village that could no longer support them. (The yearly number of births in India is equal to the entire population of Australia.) They squatted on a small piece of rural land and the government let them stay.

They gathered to welcome us. With pride they showed the well the government had just provided. They celebrated with joy their new access to water—murky, green water. But the well was a promise of greater things to come.

They walked with us along the paths, pushing aside the livestock and dogs and chickens. They led us to a gathering place between their huts. They gestured to a bed covered with a recycled Care Bears blanket. They invited us to sit, as if on a throne. They sat on the ground around us.

One of their leaders came and bowed to the ground before the Moderator. Then he grovelled, scratching the dirt just beyond my toes. I wept on your behalf, that anyone, anywhere, should feel the need to express humility in this way. There were speeches and garlands of gratitude. Then someone asked if we would like to hear a song. We welcomed their gift.

The man who grovelled left and with some authority ordered in Hindi that something should be retrieved. Younger men brought a used paint can, a stick attached to the can with a thin metal wire and another stick with animal hair like a violin bow. The man sat before us, played his "paint can cello" and crooned with joy. At the chorus, the whole village joined in. In their eyes was joy; a thankfulness and strength arising from what others had done for them.

They found joy in their new well and the promise of government acceptance and support it represented. They found joy in the lessons of basic health and hygiene and witness offered through the local Christian church. They found joy in the generosity and love we represented.

Joy distinguishes itself as delight in the character or accomplishment of another. It requires us to look from what we do to what is done for us. Joy celebrates the gifts and giftedness others bring into our lives. "Joy to the world," we will sing, "the Lord has come."

Luke 2:10-11:"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.'"

The joy of Christmas is greater than anything we have or do. The joy arises out of our celebration of the eternal character of God expressed in the Saviour Babe born in a manger.

Rev. Dr. David Sutherland is minister at St. Andrew's, St. John's.

Morality Musings

The web doesn't disappoint. By Bradley Childs

Pat Robertson

BLOG

Walk Good is a blog written by Josh Fults. Josh is a minister and public speaker; he is also a counsellor with masters degrees in psychology and apologetics. His blog is quite good. Generally his topics have to do with marriage and families but he also has a way of challenging his readers. Most recently I enjoyed "Steven King [who is a Presbyterian] and God" and "18 Things I Want My Son to Know About Life."

FIND IT @ **joshfults.com.**

√. PERSONALITY

Duck Dynasty ... need I say more? I love this show. It's addictive. Where else can you find a show where everybody seems to love each other, and that has no bad language, no violence, no sex, drugs and rock and roll, and ends every show with a family prayer? And it has a crazy uncle to boot! By now most people know a bit of the Robertson family story but lately a lot more information has been coming out and more personal clips are filling up the web. To that end, there is a really great one with Phil Robertson, the family patriarch, titled, "Duck Commander Preachin' Hard—Shell Shocked Outdoors." You gotta love it.

FIND IT @ **youtube.com. Search "Duck Commander Preachin Hard."**

VIDEO

I know, I know, I just wrote about Pat Robertson. He's not all bad, of course. In fact, I've heard him say some truly insightful things. But every once in a while the crazy tank fills up a bit too much and old Pat has to let some loose. Such was the case this November when Pat took a phone call on the 700 Club from a woman whose husband had cheated on her. In short, Pat tells the wife of a cheating husband to make things more exciting at home and be grateful for her house and clothing. He also excuses the husband with a simple "he's a man," as if that's the only explanation needed. But don't let me put words in the man's mouth. See for yourself.

FIND IT @ **youtube.com. Search "Pat Robertson on cheating husband."**

TECHNOLOGY

Now if you know me, you know that I've been using "The World's Most Powerful Tablet/Computer" for some time now. You'll also know that I despise all things Apple. Nevertheless, those things keep selling. In fact, they've sold so much, and so many ministers are now using iPads during their worship services, that a new pulpit (the "iPulpit") has been designed just for them. The iPad slips right into a slot cut into the specially-made pulpit. There is even a top-of-the-line version for $750 with a space below for a Bible. You may love it, you may hate it, but no matter what, you've got to agree—the times they are a changin'.

FIND IT @ **churchm.ag. Search for "iPulpit."**

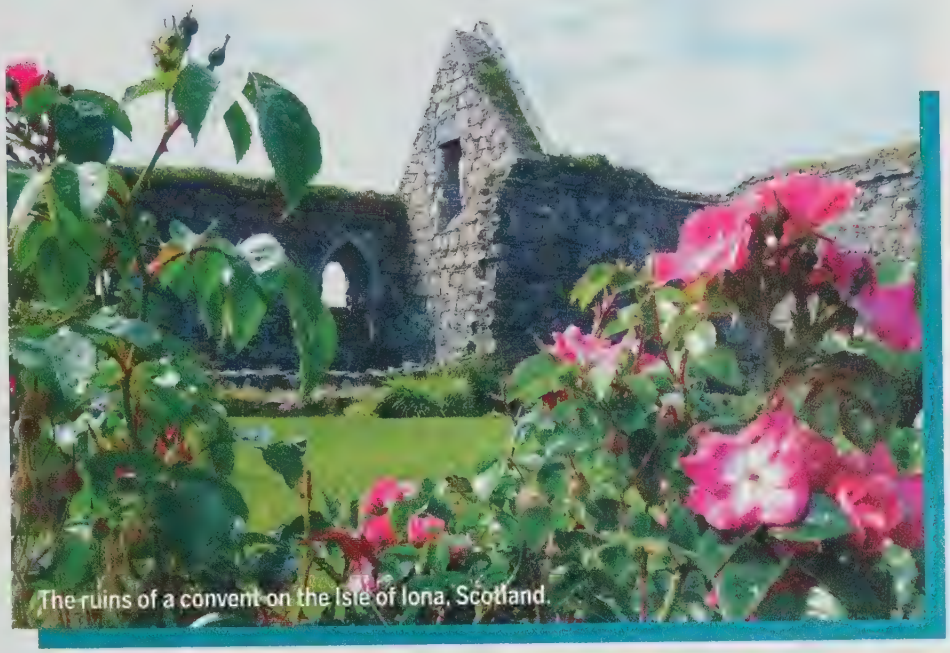
Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

PILGRIMAGE

Leaving Iona

Journeys, destinations and new beginnings.

By Connie Wardle



The ruins of a convent on the Isle of Iona, Scotland.

From July 6 to 22, 2012, Connie Wardle participated in a pilgrimage through countries touched by the Protestant Reformation—France, Switzerland and Scotland. This is the 10th of a series of reflections on the journey.

I felt like a real pilgrim. The morning was cold and heavy with fog. I wasn't dressed warmly enough and I shivered as we waited for the ferry that would take us to the Isle of Iona.

For most of the pilgrims in our group, this was a high point of the journey. Iona, with its connection to St. Columba and the modern, ecumenical Iona Community, seemed like it should possess some kind of spiritual energy. It has been called a "thin place," a place where heaven and earth come close together.

It felt strange to walk through that mist, down a road marked by crosses and ruins, past a cemetery full of kings, to the rebuilt abbey. We stood beneath St. Martin's cross, which has stood since the eighth century. And we sang:

"At night, as I dreamt, God summoned the day; for God never sleeps, but patterns the morning with slithers of gold or glory in grey."

After a few days in Scotland, it was easy to see where Rev. George MacLeod, the founder of the Iona Community and the author of the poem, found the image of glory in grey.

As the sun burned away the mist and the low clouds gave way to blue skies, we explored the abbey and the island.

This year marks the 1,450th anniversary of the arrival of St. Columba and his companions on the shore of Iona. The Irish monk founded an abbey and it became a centre for monasticism and education. The famous illuminated manuscript, the *Book of Kells*, may have been created here. And Iona's high crosses may have been the first of their kind.

Today's Iona Community was founded in 1938, when MacLeod, a minister from a parish in Glasgow, gathered unemployed craftsmen and young clergymen to rebuild the abbey. They lived and worked together to create a place of hope in the midst of the Great Depression.

Members of the Iona Community live according to a rule that requires daily Bible reading and prayer, pursuit of peace and justice, and mutual accountability for how they use their time and money.

The community aims to hold together the need for retreat and personal spirituality, and the need to go out from places of sanctuary to care for those in need, Rev. Peter Macdonald, the community's leader, explained to us.

It's "about rebuilding this common life [which is lived on Iona] back in an urban setting," he said. "The work of Iona then and now begins when you leave."

Those words haunted me as I climbed hills and wandered by the shore. "It begins when you leave."

I realized that is the case with any pilgrimage, or even any worship service. Going somewhere seeking God is the beginning of a journey. Sure, the road can be long and sometimes cold, shrouded by glory in grey. Other times it can be warm and bathed in sunlight. Yet the end of that journey is only ever a beginning. The real work begins when that road brings you home again.

In the late afternoon I stood on the deck of the ferry for a second time, watching the abbey retreat back toward the horizon. For most of us, Iona had been a longed-for destination. Now something new was beginning.

Connie Wardle is the Record's *staff writer.*

ST. ANDREW'S, ARMSTRONG, B.C.
Five generations of a family gather for the baptism of Lillian White. Pictured here are Wendy Kay (grandmother) holding Lillian White, Alicia Kay White (mother), Isobel Kay (great-grandmother), Rev. Beverley Kay (great-grandfather), who baptised Lillian, and Rev. Wendy Adams, minister of St. Andrew's. Lillian Graham (great-great-grandmother), age 102, sits in front.

& People Places

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Photographs can be uploaded at presbyterianrecord.ca.

ST. GILES KINGSWAY, TORONTO
Two church school students hand Ruth Anderson an extra-big card in celebration of her 100th birthday. The congregation took a moment during a Sunday service to honour their longtime member.

GARBOVICHI, BELARUS
Kindergarten students hold "cuddle quilts" made by members and friends of Mount Zion, Ridgetown, Ont. Eight years running now, Dr. David and Margaret Campbell (pictured) have travelled to Garbovichi (three hours West of Minsk) to help the students.

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- Harvey, N.B., Knox and Acton; Interim Moderator Rev. Douglas Blaikie, 512 Charlotte St., Fredericton, NB E3C 1E1; 506-455-8220; minister@sapc.ca.
- Saint John, N.B., Saint Columba; Half-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Wendy MacWilliams, 28 Somerset Dr., Hanwell, NB E3C 1M8; 506-206-5031; wendymacwilliams@rogers. com.
- Tabusintac, N.B., St. John's; New Jersey, Zion; and Bartibog, St. Matthew's; Full-time three point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Derek Krunys, 206 Wellington St., Miramichi, NB E1N 1M7; dkrunys@hotmail.com.
- Truro, N.S., St. James and St. Paul's; Full-time minister for two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Michael Koslowski, 2-75 Altavista Lane, Halifax, NS B3N 0A1; 902-402-6747; michaelkoslowski@eastlink.ca.

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- Ottawa, St. Andrew's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. William Ball, 470 Roosevelt Ave., Ottawa, ON K2A 1Z6; 613-722-1144; wball@mywestminster.ca.
- Ottawa, St. Paul's; Senior minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Shaun Seaman, 49 Acklam Terrace, Kanata, ON K2K 2H6; shaun.seaman110@gmail.com.

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- Hillsburgh, St. Andrew's; Music director/organist; job duties include music selections for Sunday mornings, special occasions, celebration of the seasons, meetings, direct senior and bell choirs as well as junior choir when required; 519-855-6216 and leave message.
- Markham, Markham Chinese; Full-time associate minister for English-speaking ministry; Interim Moderator Rev. Sam Priestley, 19 Elm Lea St., Markham, ON L3P 3M8; 905-294-1633; sam.priestley@bell.net.
- Mount Forest, St. Andrew's and Conn, Knox; Interim Moderator Rev. Andrew Apack Song, 51 Church St., Elora, ON N0B 1S0; 519-846-0680 (church) or 519-846-8028 (home); andrewapack@gmail.com.
- North Bay, Calvin; Minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Les Drayer, c/o Calvin Presbyterian Church, 401 First Ave. W., North Bay, ON P1B 3C5; 705-495-4660; search@calvinpresbyterianchurch.ca; www.calvinpresbyterianchurch.ca.
- Scarborough, Fallingbrook; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. J. P. Ian Morrison, 17 Earswick Dr., Scarborough, ON M1E 1C7; 416-460-5214; Ian.morrison@sympatico.ca.
- Scarborough, Melville; Organist/choir director for one year; Chair of the Personnel Committee Barbara McElgunn, 70 Old Kingston Rd., Scarborough ON M1E 3J5; 416-281-9676; mcelgunnb@rogers.com.
- Toronto, St. Andrew's Humber Heights; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Sean Howard, 3819 Bloor St. W., Toronto, ON M9B 1K7; 416-233-9800 x 202; sean@standrewsislington.org.
- Toronto, Trinity York Mills; effective January 1, 2014; Interim Moderator Rev. Tim Purvis, c/o Westview Presbyterian Church, 233 Westview Blvd., Toronto, ON M4B 3J7; westview@bellnet.ca.

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PO Box 824, Exeter, ON N0M 1S6; 519-235-2608; henderson.johncharles@gmail.com.

- Lucknow and South Kinloss; Full-time; Interim Moderator Mark Davidson; 519-924-1537; m.mark.davidson@hotmail.com.
- Meaford, Knox; Part-time minister 75%; Interim Moderator Rev. Peggy Kipfer; 519-599-6645; peggykipfer@gmail.com.
- St. Catharines, Knox; Interim Moderator Rev. Wally Hong, c/o Drummond Hill Presbyterian Church, 6136 Lundy's Lane, Niagara Falls, ON L2G 1T1; 905-358-9624; presbyterian@outlook.com.
- Stoney Creek, Heritage Green; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Charmain Sebestyen; csebestyen@shaw.ca.

Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

- Brandon, Man., St. Andrew's; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Dong-Ha Kim, 35 Aurora Cres., Brandon, MB R7B 4G4; 204-727-5874; donghafpc@mymts.net.
- Kenora, Ont., First; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Ralph Fluit; 807-482-1209; rflui1109@gmail.com.
- Winnipeg, St. John's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Brenda Fraser, 2373 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R2V 4T6; 204-339-3502; brendafraser@mymts.net.

Synod of Saskatchewan

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- Calgary, Alta., St. Andrew's; Minister, Vision and Direction; Presbytery Representative Rev. Grant Gunnink, 7655 26 Ave. SW, Calgary, AB T3H 3X2; 403-249-6006; revg@valleyviewpc.org.
- Edmonton, Mill Woods; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Jean Bryden; 59-10453 20 Ave. NW, Edmonton, AB T6J 5H1; 780-756-6320; jebryden@gmail.com.

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- Comox Valley, Comox Valley; Interim Moderator Rev. John Green, 579 Grayson Rd., Campbell River, BC V9W 6K3; revjohngreen@gmail.com.
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obituaries

Hill, Rev. Derwyn, passed away at Heritage Green Nursing Home on October 5, 2013. Predeceased by wife Mary Helen Hill earlier this year and survived by sons David, Gregory, Gordon and Andrew.

Derwyn had a life filled with music as a jazz drummer and teaching as an ordained minister. He was late coming to the ministry, preceded by time in the family business, Hill Brothers Plastering in Hamilton, Ont. In 1963 he was ordained in Grimsby, Ont., after graduating from Knox College and during his 30-year career served in Sudbury (Calvin), Carleton Place (St. Andrew's), Preston (Knox), Meadowvale (White Oak) and Hamilton (Eastmount). All the while he attempted to keep up with a contemporary message to the churches he served.

Derwyn was a founding member of a musical band of ministers, "The Lost and Found Dep't." who spread their message through music to congregations in the Western provinces, Jamaica and all over Southern Ontario.

We will remember him for his relaxed smile and his sense of humour that he carried alongside his family of four sons and loyal wife, Helen for all of his 85 years.

McElwain, Mary, in October 2013 after a stroke in St. Catharines, Ont. Survived by son Mark (Susan) and granddaughters Alexandra and Jennifer.

Mary grew up in Strathroy, Ont., and taught in one-room schools near Sarnia. With her husband, the Rev. Dr. William McElwain, she served congregations in Sarnia, Montreal, Newmarket, Scarborough, Ottawa and eventually St. Catharines until Bill's death in 2004. Active leading WMS and Christian education programs.

FOR THE JOURNEY

A Day in the Life

No one knows what God has prepared for us. By David Webber

AMELIA SWAN, 10, ST. ANDREW'S, STREETSVILLE, ONT.

It's December and the ice is beginning to build on our end of the lake. It usually gets to about a metre thick by the end of February, strong enough to drive a loaded logging truck on. Since Lac La Hache spends the better part of five months on ice, the locals who are stuck here for the winter have to figure out something to do with it. Ice fishing figures large in the winter itinerary. So does cross-country skiing and snowmobiling. Apparently, years ago some locals even used to ice sail.

The definitive Lac La Hache winter sport in years gone by was skate fishing. There is a story in the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* dated March 9, 1968 describing how the Lac La Hache locals would skate-fish for lake trout up to 25 pounds in size. Of course the ice had to be clear enough to see through and that is only an occasional phenomenon, making skate fishing a very special experience. In the article, Mrs. Buster Hamilton is quoted as saying: "They skate around the lake until they spot a big trout. When they locate one they keep skating between the fish and the deep water gradually scaring it into the shallow water. Finally, when the fish is tired out and rests on the bottom in about eight feet of water, they cut a hole in the ice and spear the fish." The reporter, a cynic from south of the border, came off as a tad doubtful in the article. I'm a believer; I've seen the pictures. I've even tried to skate down a fish or two at our end of the lake, not for the fish mind you but for the exercise.

As I recall, it was early December about 20 years ago. Linda and I, our two teenage boys, Davin and Halden together with our infant daughter Chelsea, awoke to an early freeze. Overnight, the temperature had plummeted to far below freezing. Our shallow end of the lake must have frozen in an instant. I imagined it happening almost cartoon-like, perhaps to the sound of a single chime from a tinkle bell. The new winter ice was deep, strong and crystal clear. Oddly, the sky was lead grey, very low and heavy with ice fog. The boys and I went down to the lake to test the ice and found it strong enough for skating. Soon that's what we were all doing, except for Chelsea who was being spirited along on her old wooden sleigh. With the aid of the low, leaden sky reducing reflection to almost zero, the view through the ice was phenomenal. It was like skating on the surface of absolutely calm water. Everything was transparent and visible beneath our feet and it felt like everything above our heads was rock solid and impenetrable. And then the boys spotted several large fish. The race was on as each one tried to skate down a trout. In the end, everyone got lots of exercise, including the fish.

> Everything was transparent and visible beneath our feet and everything above our heads was impenetrable

I will never forget that December morning. It was surreal, like it was a strange, new world where everything transparent and fluid was under my feet and everything dense and solid ›

BEULAH GARRISON, SAANICH PENNINSULA, NORTH SAANICH, B.C.

was over my head. It all seemed upside down. It felt like I should have been skating on my hands so that I could be in sync with the creation around me. Surreal days like this usually set my mind to contemplating a new creation.

As a Christian, particularly at this time of year, I am very conscious that my whole life is framed within the advents of Christ. The first was when he was born in a manger 2,000 years ago. He lived and loved and taught and eventually died on a cross ultimately to rise from the grave, revealing God and effecting God's salvation for sinners the likes of me. Second is his daily coming into my life by the power of the Holy Spirit. He brings about renewal and regeneration in me, particularly as I have fellowship or communion with others and he powerfully fulfills his promise to be in the midst of those who gather or serve in his name (Matthew 18:20 and 25:40). Third is the complete new creation that God will institute when Christ comes in the end times. In my experience, this advent is not something that we Presbyterians like to think or talk about. Few of us even know what we believe when it comes to what theologians like to call eschatology. But it's this third and final advent that surreal days like my December upside-down-world experience causes me to contemplate.

Whether we Presbyterians like to talk about it very much or not, it appears the Bible does. The New Testament insists that Christ is returning and a new creation will result. I don't think it is putting it too strongly to say that the return of Christ and the new creation that will result is both the raison d'etre and conclusion of the New Testament. As John E. Alsup so aptly puts it: "Language regarding new creation and a new eschatological (promised end-time) existence dominates the fundamental orientation of all New Testament preaching and writing. The locus of this orientation is the resurrection of Jesus; the new creation has dawned with the dawn of Easter."

The exciting thing is what has dawned with the resurrection of Jesus; the New Testament promises will be fulfilled with his final advent. There will be a bodily resurrection to new life for us and a physical new creation for us to live in (Revelation 21:1, 2 Peter 3:13). R. J. Bauckham writes: "With the final achievement of human salvation there will come also the liberation of the whole material creation from its share in the curse of sin (Romans 8:19–23). The Christian hope is not for redemption from the world, but for the redemption of the world." That's pretty heady stuff, at least for me. I like the way the Nina Simone spiritual puts it: "There's a new world comin' and it's just around the bend."

But what will it look like? What will it be like? Will it be an upside-down kingdom kind of thing or a renewed Garden of Eden? The Bible has all kinds of word pictures; everything from a wedding feast to paradise restored to a New Jerusalem. But these are just metaphorical. In the end, we have to do the Advent thing: live in hope and wait and see. As the apostle so aptly summarizes it: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of several books.

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DEANA WEYMAN, ST. ANDREW'S, KING CITY, ONT.

Merry Christmas

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